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IN SHAKESPEARE'S WARWICKSHIRE
AND THE
UNKNOWN YEARS



OLIVER BAKER

[*Frontispiece*

IN SHAKESPEARE'S
WARWICKSHIRE
AND THE
UNKNOWN YEARS

BY
OLIVER BAKER

*Honorary Retired Fellow
of the
Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, etc.*

Illustrations
BY THE AUTHOR
and in Half-tone

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MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO KATHLEEN REES-MOGG
WHOSE NEVER-FAILING FAITH
IN MY WORK HAS KEPT ALIVE
MY OWN FAITH IN IT, THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED

STRATFORD - UPON - AVON

One Thing more, in reference to this antient Town, is observable, that it gave Birth and Sepulture to our late famous Poet *Will. Shakespere*, whose Monument I have inserted in my Discourse of the Church.

Printed in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, by Sir William Dugdale, the great antiquary, in 1656.

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F O R E W O R D

AT the formal opening of the New Place Museum in Stratford to the public, Sir Sidney Lee told me that he was going to edit a Shakespearean book on the England of the poet's time, and asked me if I would collaborate with him in writing some of the articles about the houses and domestic surroundings. I therefore began to make notes in preparation for the work, but did not hear further from Sir Sidney on the subject till I learnt later that he had relinquished the hope of continuing to direct the production of the book, which was eventually published by the Clarendon Press under the title of *Shakespeare's England*.

Meanwhile, having become more and more attracted by the task I had started upon, it became a permanent occupation for the scanty leisure that I was able to give to it, so I decided to continue the effort and put the facts already noted into a readable shape. A year or two later I happened to travel in the London train with Sir Sidney Lee, and told him what I had been doing, whereupon he, and also Sir Lionel Cust and Mr. Ernest Law, who were returning with him from a meeting of the Trustees of Shakespeare's Birthplace, all urged me to go on with my book.

Such a book as I contemplated would have been much easier to write in the eighteenth century or in the early part of the nineteenth, but in those times it would have been superfluous and unwanted. Few people have any idea of the vast gulf which yawns between the pre-steam-engine days and the present time, a gulf which the internal-combustion engine is making ever wider and deeper.

One cannot repress a somewhat guilty feeling at the thought of adding one more book to the many that have been written about Shakespeare—already a big library in itself—but I think,

nevertheless, there is room for another which may show from records and remains that still exist what were the actual conditions and surroundings among which Shakespeare was reared, and possibly throw light on his career and, one may hope, disperse some of the delusions circulated about him and his ancestors by hearsay, ignorance, or "Decayed Intelligence."

I am glad to take this opportunity of acknowledging valued help from the following. My wife, for her untiring efforts to keep order in my MS. The Right Hon. the Lord Hesketh, who kindly brought masses of documents from Rufford to Easton Neston, that I might the more readily examine them. The late D. T. B. Wood, for much good advice. F. C. Wellstood, M.A., F.S.A., Founder of the Dugdale Society. Miss Anne Treneer, M.A., B.Litt., Mrs. Kenneth Holden, Mrs. Evelyn Sands, Rupert Deakin, M.A., the late A. F. de Navarro, F.S.A., T. R. Hodges, A. C. Coldicott, Harold Baker, Christopher Whitfield, the late H. H. Edmondson, and my son Geoffrey, who was ever ready in many varied ways.

Finally, Paul Snyder whose casual snap-shot of myself was thought of for the purpose, and has been placed by my friends as the frontispiece of this book.



FIG. I.—Remains of the bridge that Shakespeare knew

Chapter I

Warwick

ON the Thursday next after Hock-day¹ in the twentieth year of the reign of King Henry VIII, the stewards of the Dean and Chapter of St. Mary's College at Warwick held their manorial Court there; and John Palmer the Snitterfield Tithing man being sworn, presented that Richard Shakkespere, one of the tenants, owed suit of court and made default. This we learn from a Warwickshire Court Roll now in the Public Record Office, and in the same bundle of old parchments another roll shows that at their court held five years later, on the Thursday after the Feast of St. Michael, John Palmer presented that William Mcyhoo, Richard Shakstaff and Robert Ardern owed suit of court, and that Robert Ardern had his hedges ruinous lying between his land and the land of John Palmer.²

¹ Hock-day customs are supposed to have been held to commemorate a victory over the Danes in 1002.

² Court Rolls, 207, 88.

It is in this unassuming fashion that the two grandfathers of the great poet emerge together from the murky twilight of the past.

But it is only into a patchy sort of candle-glimmer that they come, and any rays of real daylight that one can throw upon them from recorded history are narrow gleams and few. Their figures as they emerge are ghostly and indistinct. We do not know much personal detail about them, but the scene into which they appear can even yet be more or less definitely portrayed. A great deal of the Warwick that they knew still survives, and Snitterfield retains important features that they would recognize. It would, however, be altogether misleading to suggest that even the most unspoiled landscape or the most ancient-looking buildings can be necessarily accepted as being, or even as illustrating, the Warwickshire of Shakespeare's ancestors. Four hundred years have not elapsed without leaving much evidence of change, for better or for worse, upon both. On the other hand, he is not to be envied who cannot from what remains picture for himself the spirit of those far-off days, and fill up the gaps and scars of time; whose imagination has not power to ignore the modern and the commonplace, and to reconstruct at least in the mind's eye scenes of which the lineaments are so full of history.

The Warwick of Robert Arden and Richard Shakespeare is still traceable in the older parts of the blue-grey mass of towers, of walls and gables, that stretches itself on the steeply rising ground across the road from Snitterfield. It is still dominated by the great tower of the parish church, as the College of the Blessed Mary dominated the town that they knew, but a devastating fire destroyed, in 1694, the old tower and nave, with many houses, on the west side of the town. The dwelling-place of the College brethren has been destroyed in modern times, though their chapter-house remains, together with the chancel and Lady Chapel, some exquisite little chantries and a fine Norman crypt. These, however, would not be visible to the two yeomen, as, oblivious of the great interest that future ages would take in them, they rode (perhaps together, for Snitterfield lies on the direct route from the home of Robert Arden at Wilmcote) down from the wooded heights of Arden

to the flat, rich meadows by Avon side, in obedience to the summons of John Palmer the tithing-man.

It is a very wide street, a "large" one John Leland called it, that climbs steeply to the West Gate. The town on this side has encroached hardly at all on the surrounding fields, and the houses which straggle down the edges of the ascent are, for the most part, ancient.¹ The Town Walls are not very obvious, and to the left of the Gate are surmounted by the fourteenth-century great hall and other fine half-timbered buildings of the old Guild of the Trinity and of St. George, which have been occupied for more than three hundred years by the Earl of Leicester's celebrated Hospital. To the left of the Gate, the Town Ditch has been filled up and built over with small houses, behind which the old Town Wall can still be discovered, and in one corner of it a small fifteenth-century doorway or sally-port.

The chapel of the Guild is a fourteenth-century building of grey stone with a fine square tower which stands over the Gate, the passage of which has been partly cut through the solid rock; and the entrance to the town was through two fourteenth-century moulded arches in the base of this tower. Let us ignore the wide gap which has been made through the houses on the south side of the chapel, and, dodging as best we can the motor-cars that roar and rush through it, follow in the trail of the two farmers and try to imagine the echo of their horses' hoofs as they passed into the town through the long, dark, and steeply ascending archway, groined with seventeen great stone ribs, resting on the worn grey rock on one side, and on the other carried by the heavily buttressed wall.² Above us on a platform or terrace on the left stands the ancient Hospital which (with one other fine timber house) makes the delightful group of old buildings that has been so often sketched, photographed, and described that we need not now linger over it; it is really a fine early fifteenth-century building of timber, though studded with Elizabethan coats of arms, dates, and other

¹ When this was written (in 1920) there were only two small houses in the road, both ancient and nearly a mile from the town, but now (1937) the road is lined on both sides with glaring petrol pumps and weirdly designed bungalows.

² Below the ribs are considerable remains of twelfth-century work.

embellishments; and there are some good Gothic houses opposite to it. But beyond it, the High Street (re-edified after the great fire) is a desert of painted stucco, and so painfully modern that no impression of old Warwick can be got from it. One may be certain, however, that it was somewhere hereabouts that the two yeomen left their horses, as the Crown Inn and the Cross were both in what was then called the High Pavement. Hastening along it, we are still in the burnt-out area, and faced on every side with eighteenth-century stone and nineteenth-century painted plaster, but before us is the great Wren-like tower with its bleached stone and numerous pinnacles, and the singular nave of the parish church rebuilt more than two centuries ago, a quaint example of the transition from Gothic to Classic.

Fortunately a ground-plan and an elevation, which are in the library of All Souls College, Oxford, have preserved for us a record of the destroyed parts of the Church. From them one can see that the old buildings were on the same scale as the present ones except that the tower was plain and comparatively low. The buildings east of the transepts remain to a great extent uninjured. They are altogether so wonderful, so crammed with beauty, with history and romance that they cannot be more than dimly suggested in these pages, and, moreover, have already been well and often described. Opening out of the South Transept is the Chapel of Our Lady, with its wonderful series of tombs to the Earls of Warwick, well known to tourists as the "Beauchamp Chapel." Between it and the very fine fourteenth-century chancel is a group of singular and exquisitely wrought, vaulted chambers, as to which various theories and speculations have been put forward. Two of these chambers are evidently the nave and chancel of a diminutive chantry chapel and I think the others must be relic chambers and treasures. In addition to the usual precious vessels, costly vestments, etc., the College of the Blessed Mary possessed an astonishing collection of relics which would demand a very safe depository such as these chambers, lying buried between the chancel and the Lady Chapel, would, with their strongly barred and grated windows, effectively provide.

Of these relics Dugdale quotes a list made in the reign of



FIG. 2.—Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, Beauchamp Chapel



FIG. 6.—House with recess, Henley in Arden

Henry VI. They were thirty-nine in number, and among many bones of saints were "Part of the Cross on which Jesus was Crucified, some of the Hair, Milk and Raiment, of the Blessed Mary, part of the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, a thorn which was placed on the head of Jesus, part of The Chair of the Patriarch Abraham, Oil in which came fire from heaven on the eve of Easter. Part of the burning bush which Moses saw which was not consumed!"¹

Whether Shakespeare's grandfathers venerated these relics is doubtful, but before they died all had been swept away by the relentless besom of Thomas Cromwell, who would value them only for the gold or silver in which they were enshrined.

The chancel was begun about 1368 by Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. His son continued, and his grandson in 1392 finished it. It is a work of rare beauty and interest, having some features that are unique. The vaulting of the roof is supported by flying ribs that spring out from the walls. There are numerous interesting tombs and in the midst of the chancel the beautiful altar-tomb to the founder and his wife who wears a curious reticulated head-dress, and has her hand clasped in that of her husband.

Various kinds of secular business were discussed in the naves of churches,² and we may permit ourselves to assume the congregating of College tenants in St. Mary's, and their subsequent withdrawal through the north transept and some comparatively low vaulted chambers to the small Chapter House, which has nine canopied stone seats in the thickness of the wall for the Dean and Prebends, but is now half filled by the great tomb of Sir Fulke Greville, the poet, which he built in his lifetime and on which he states in his own words that he was "servant to Queen Elizabeth, Counciller to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney."

¹ "Quaedam pars de Cruce in qua Crucifixus est Jesus. De Capillis b. Mariae et de vestimentis ejus. Quaedam pars de lacte b. Mariae Virginis. De olco S. Katherinae Virginis. De tumbe Domini nostri Jesu Christi, de spina quae posita fuit super caput Jesu. Quaedam pars de Cathedra Patriarcha Abrahae, Oleum in quo venit ignis in vigilia Paschae de caelo. De rubo quem viderat Moyses incombustum."—Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1730, p. 433.

² The Court-leet of the Prior of Coventry seems to have been held in the church.—*Coventry Leet Book*, p. xvii.

THE PRESENT BRIDGE

The graceful span of the Georgian bridge which now takes the traveller at a high level across the Avon makes possible the well known and very impressive view of the castle towers, turrets and battlemented walls, which rise amid banks of dense foliage at the end of a smooth reach of river, and "crown the watery glade." It is a beautiful and romantic scene, but could have been visible only to the birds of the air in ancient time. The erection of this bridge, together with the alterations that its construction entailed to the neighbouring roads, and the additions to the park and gardens which were carried out in the same year (1790) by George Greville, Earl of Warwick, have greatly disguised and destroyed the ancient aspect of the place, having swallowed up several streets and lanes, and even part of a churchyard.

THE ANCIENT BRIDGE

But the most revolutionary change produced by these rearrangements was the creation of a new approach to the town with wide, sweeping roads of easy gradient, causing thereby the abandonment of the old narrow Gothic bridge, which for strategic reasons had been designed to enter the town at the foot of the rock on which the castle stands. It was the most easily defended point, because there the rock was precipitous, the river wide, the ground marshy, and when friend or foe had crossed it, he landed under the frowning walls of a great fortress and immediately beneath the over-hanging machicolations of Caesar's Tower. The street by which he would ascend to the East Gate, after passing the Castle walls and the Barbican (itself a small fortress), would skirt "the greate creaste of yerth that the wall stode on"¹ before he could enter the town. The bridge was fortified, for Leland says, "the strengthe of the bridge by the castle stondithe for the southe gate,"² and in describing the additions made by Richard III to the Castle he uses the word "strength" in the sense of a tower or fortified work, "he began and half finished a mighty

¹ Leland, *Itinerary*, p. 59, vol. iv, ed. 1744.

² Ib.

tower or strengthe." No doubt the bridge had a gate tower near to the castle side of the river for the protection of the suburbs and Mill Street (which were outside the Town Walls), as many ancient bridges had when they were in towns; as the Monnow bridge has, for instance, at Monmouth, and as the Tees bridge at Barnard Castle did have till modern times, though the castle towers there stand on the rocks just above it, exactly as here at Warwick. Until the eighteenth century two bridges at Shrewsbury were fortified.

Leland says that the Warwick bridge had twelve fair arches¹ of stone, but it is now a ruin, for the centre part of it was swept away by a flood soon after the new bridge was finished. Seven arches still remain, two of which on the Mill Street side of the river are inaccessible and, being much smothered in trees and weeds, the roots of which are growing in the masonry, will certainly crumble and fall in a few years if left unrepaired. The other five arches are separated from them by a wide gap through which the green water slides slowly to the adjacent mill-weir. From the other side of the river one can get at the bridge ruins, but they are in private grounds, only accessible by special permission. From a large island now covered with trees, some of them can be seen to have a more interesting character than those of the more celebrated Clopton bridge at Stratford, their masonry being recessed with chamfered edges instead of remaining flush with the walls, and are at least as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Since the time of Richard Shakespeare more than three and a half centuries have passed over Warwick, bringing in their train brawls, fires, tempests, decay, pestilence and neglect, the gnawing tooth of time, "the wretched siege of battering days." All these have altered the town he knew; but still more have the changes of architectural fashion, entailing the destruction of old buildings and the erection of new ones. Increase of population, smoky industries, the making of railway sidings, corrugated-iron sheds and garages, on the one hand and the growth of tall trees and rank foliage on the other.

It is probable, therefore, that the best general impression of

¹ Referred to in the *Black Book of Warwick* in 1535 as "the great bridge," p. 221.

the Warwick of Shakespeare's grandfathers is to be got from the notes of a careful and experienced traveller who visited it between 1535 and 1543; notes which we know as *The Itinerary of John Leland*, and which we owe to the initiative of Henry VIII.

But before reading them, let us recall the graphic description of the site of this town, written by another great antiquary Sir William Dugdale, and first published in 1656.

"The first Place of Note that presents itself to my View, on the Banks of this fair Stream is WARWICK, standing on the North Side thercof; which, as it is & hath been the chiefest Town of these Parts, & whercof the whole County, upon the first Division of this Realm into Shires, took its Name; so may it justly glory in its Situation beyond any other, standing upon a rocky Ascent from every Side, & in a dry & fertile Soil, having the Benefit of rich & pleasant Meadows on the South Part, with the lofty Groves & spacious Thickets of the *Wood-land* on the North: Wherefore, were there nothing else to argue its great Antiquity; the Commodities which so surround it, might sufficiently satisfy us that the Britans made an early Plantation here to participate of them."¹

Leland says, *inter alia*, "The towne of Warwike stondithe on a mayne rokky hille, risynge from est to west. The beauty and glory of the towne is in 2 strets, whercof one is caullyd the Highe Strete, and goith from the est gate to the west, having a right goodly crosse in the midle of it.² The towne hath bene right strongly dykd and waulyd, havynge the compas of a good mile within the wauls. The dike is moste manifestly perceyvyd from the castle to the west-gate and there is the greate creaste of yerth that the wall stode on. Parte of the wauls nere the gates be yet sene. The easte gate and the west yet remayne. The northe gate is downe. The strengthe of the bridge by the castle stondithe for the southe gate. The magnificent and stronge castle of Warwike lieing at the west-southe-west end of the towne, hard by the right ripe of Avon, is sett apon an highe rokke of stone, and hathe

¹ *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, p. 260.

² Leland's *Itinerary*, 1908, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Part V, p. 41. These extracts are not precisely in the order in which he put them.

3 goodly towers in the este fronte of it. There is a fair towre on the northe syde of it. And in this parte of the castle K. Rich. 3. pullyd downe a pece of the waulle and began and halfe finished a mighty tower, or strengthe, for to shoute out gunns. This peace as he left it so it remaynethe onfinishid. The doungeon now in ruins stondithe in the west-northe-weste parte of the castle. There is also a towre west-northe-weste, and thrugh it a posterne-gate of yron. All the principall lodgyngs of the castle with the haul and chapel ly on the southe syd of the castle, and here the King dothe muche cost in makynge foundations in the rokkes to sustayne that syde of the castle, for great peces fell out of the rokkes that sustayne it.¹

"Within the precinct of the towne is but one paroche chirch dedicate to St. Marye, standing in the middle of the towne. This churche is faire and large.

"Richard Erle of Warwike, Lievetenaunt of Fraunce, devised a right fayre, large and somptuous chapell on the southe syd of the quicrc. This stately pece of worke was after made by the executors of his testament, and there he is entumbid right princly, and porturyd, with an image of coper and gilt, hoped ovir with staves of coper and gilt lyke a chariot.²

"The ould mansion-place of the colledge and deanry of St. Maries in Warwik stood there where now the east-south-east part of the cemetery is. The new colledge lodging, hard without the east end of the cemetery, was builded by the executors of the testament of Rich. Earle of Warwike.³ Most of the Prebendes houses be at the west end of our Ladys Church in the streets. Thcre be in that colledge a deane and 5 prebendes. There is over the east-gate a fayre chappell of St. Peter. There is over the west-gate a goodly chappell of St. James. On the north syde of St. James is a pretty colledge, having a 4 preists that sing in St. James Chappell, and they belong to a Fraternity of our Ladye and St. George.⁴ Some

¹ Leland's *Itinerary*, 1908, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Part V, pp. 40 and 41.

² Ib. p. 41.

³ This was the old Grammar School destroyed when the new one was built in 1876.

⁴ Ib. p. 44. (This, of course, is the Leicester Hospital.)

thinke that this Fraternity beganne about E. Richardes dayes and that he was a benefactor to it. The burgesses of Warwike be rulers of this.¹

"The suburbe without the west-gate is cawlyd the West-end. It is a very large strete. There was a colege of Blake Friers in the northe parte of this suburbe. There is a suburbe in the north syd of Warwike, and in this is a chapell of St. Michaell, where sometyme was a coledge havinge a master et confratres; but now it is taken as a free-chapell. The Kinge giveth it. The buildinge of the house is sore decayed."²

The chapel of this fraternity, a fourteenth-century building of grey stone with its tall east window blocked up, is still standing, but is used for a blacksmith's forge. In the garden behind it is an old Gothic building of half-timber work which was part of the lodgings of the brethren. In an Appendix to the *Itinerary* is the following note, "Domus leprosorum S. Michaelis Waruici fundata per Rogerus de bello monte comitem Waruicensum," which would seem to indicate that it was originally a hospital for lepers. The remainder of Leland's account of Warwick relates chiefly to the tombs and epitaphs in the churches, the pedigrees of the chief families, and an account of Guy's Cliff and Guy of Warwick.

Leland came to Warwick from Banbury "12 miles by champayne ground, frutefull of corn and gresse,³ baren of woodde and 2 miles by some enclosyd and woody ground."

It must have been a goodly sight to all who approached from the south, as they saw those pale, almost spectral towers and grouped masses of grey battlements rising above the level fields, lifted high upon the rock, where the river flows between the meadows and the town. And then drawing nearer through the enclosed and woody ground, along a road now destroyed and which has long been buried under the spacious lawns of a Georgian mansion, they would pass the thatched and oak-beamed houses of Bridge End—a much more important suburb than it is now—and reach the open space facing "the goodly stone brydge of 12 arches,"⁴ where three streets met. This was

¹ Leland's *Itinerary*, 1908, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, Part V, p. 45.

² Ib. p. 45.

³ Grass.

⁴ Leland, Part V, p. 46.

a considerable plot of ground and had a tall stone cross in the midst of it.

VISIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH

Along this road from the south came Queen Elizabeth more than once in gorgeous processions of prelates, nobles, ladies and courtiers, heralds, ushers and officials. By this road must William Shakespeare, man and boy, have travelled many times. In the summer of 1575, it is pretty certain that he, being then eleven years old, would witness some of the wonderful pageants that accompanied the visit of the Queen to the Earl of Leicester at the great Castle of Kenilworth. By the descriptions of Laneham¹ we know with great exactness what fantastic conceits, what hunting, feasting, masques, and mummeries were taking place there, and are thereby enabled to recognize in one of Shakespeare's early plays (in the vision of Oberon) a poetic reminiscence of some of those incidents, together with an elaborate compliment to the Virgin Queen in whose honour they had all been organized.²

Queen Elizabeth stayed several times in Warwick itself, and of her visit in 1572, when the poet was eight and a half, there still exists among the town records a detailed account of how on August 12th in the said year it pleased the said "souireigne Lady to visit this Borough of Warwik in her hieghnis pson." Having been advised thereof by the Earl of Leicester the Bailiff and burgesses with the Recorder met Her Majesty at Fordmill hill³ as we know by the Black Book,⁴ "the said Bailief and principall Burgesses aforestated wt some other of the commoners . . . prepare themselfe according to there bounden duty to attend her heighnis at the uttermost confynes of their Libtye towards the place from whence her Mat^y should come from dynner w^{ch} was at Ichington the house of Edward Fisher being six miles from Warwick where it pleased her highnies to dyne the said xijth of August being Monday The direct way from whence leading by Tachebrook

¹ Robert Laneham's Letter, ed. Furnivall.

² *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, Sc. 2.

³ Now a part of the Castle Park.

⁴ A manuscript in the town archives.

and so thorough Myton feld And therfre it was thought convenient to expect her Mat^e at the gate between Tachebrok feld and Myton feld. Nertheles the weather having bene very fowle long tyme before And the way much staynid with carriage her Mat^y was led an other way through Chesterton pastures and so by Okeley & by that manner cam toward the towne by ffourd myll wheroff the said Bailief Recorder and Burgesses having woord they left there place afretaken And resorted to the said ffourd myl hill where being plaiced in order ffirst the Bailief then the Recorder then evry of the principall Burgesses in order kneling And behind Mr. Bailief knelid Mr. Griffyn preacher her maiesty about three of the clok in her coache accompanied w^t her Lady of Warwick in the same coche and many other Ladys & Lords attending namely the Lord Burghley lately made lord Tresorer of England The Earle of Sussex lately made Lord Chamberleyne to her Mat^y The lord howard of Effingham lately made lord pryvy seale The Earl of Oxford Lord gret chamblyn of Englonld Therle of Rutland Therle of Huntingly lately made president of the North Therle of Warwik Therle of Leyester M^t of the horse and many other bishops lords ladys & great estates aproached and came as nere as the coche could be brought nyegh to the place where the said Bailief & company knelid and there staid causing evry part & side of the coache to be openyd that all her subiects present might behold her w^{ch} most gladly they desired Wherupon after a pause made the said Recorder began his oracion."

All of which is set forth at length in the *Black Book of Warwick*.¹ The oration is a long and somewhat tedious affair beginning with the Greeks and Romans and coming down by easy stages to the "wise and politique prince King Henry the seaventh yo^r graundfather and in y^r noble and victorious father King Henry the eight whose lookes appallid the stout corages of their beholders The same also remaining naturally in yo^r hieghnes may soone put me bothe out of countenance and remembraunce also."

It seems probable that John Shakespeare was present. He was Chief Alderman of Stratford, only eight miles away and

¹ Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, p. 86.

had been Bailiff there. His son William may have been present also, as his home was so near and his uncles and aunts lived at Snitterfield which was nearer still. The presence of the Queen in Warwickshire would be well known to all of them.

The Queen listened to the oration and then the Bailiff "rising out of the place where he knelid approched now to the coche or chariott wherein her Ma^{tie} satt and coming to the side thereof kneling downe offred unto her May a purse very faire wroughte and in the purse twenty pounds all in souereynes w^{ch} her maiestie putting forth her hand recevid showing w^{ch}all a very beeming and gracious countenance," protesting, however, that as she had received a present on a former visit they ought not to have made an offcning of money. Her Majesty showed no impatience while the Oration was being read, but after the Bailiff had kissed hands, "she delivered to him the Mayse w^{ch} before the oracion he had delivered to her Maty wch she kept in her lappe all the tyme of the oracion & when the preacher aproching neigh her Maty offred a paper to her and knelid downe" she handed it to Lady Warwick and said, "If it be any matter to be answerd we will look upon it and give yo^r answer at my Lord of Warwiks house. And so was desirous to be going." The paper contained some long Latin veres which the Vicar had composed and which are entered in full in the Black Book.

THE GREAT QUEEN ARRIVES

"Then the Bailief Recorder and principell burgesses w^t ther Assistants were comanded to ther horses w^{ch} they took wth as good sped as they might and in order rode two and two togyther before her Maty from the ffourd mil hill till they cam to the castle gate And thus were they marshallid by the heraldis and gentleman ushers, first the Attendantes or Assistants to the Bailief to the nom^{br} of xxx, two and two togyther in coates of puke laid on w^t lace Then the xij principall Bur-gesses in gownes of puke lyned w^t satten & damask upon footclothes. Then two byshoppes Then the lords of the coun-saill Then next before the Quenes Maty was placid the Bailief in a gowne of skarlet on the ryht hand of the Lord compton

who then was heigh Sheref of this Shire And therfore wold have carried up his rod into the towne w^{ch} was forbidden him by the heralds & gentlemen ushers who therfore had placid the bailief on the ryht hand w^t his mace And in this maner her hieghnes was conveid to the castell gate where the said principall burgesses and assistants staid evry man in his order deviding themselfes on either side make a lane or Rome where her Ma^{ty} should passe who passing thorough them gave them thanks saying w^thall 'it is a welfavored & comly company.' "

The Bailief himself rode into the Castle carrying his mace, being so directed by the gentlemen ushers and heralds, and attended the Queen into the hall. He then repaired to his own house, to which he was attended by the cavalcade of principal burgesses and commoners, all on horseback. Master Recorder went with John Fisher, who was simply lodged because the best lodgings were taken up for the Royal household by Mr. Controller. "That Monday nyght her Ma^{ty} tarryed at Warwik and so all tuesday."

THE QUEEN GOES TO KENILWORTH

"On Wensday she desired to go to Kenelworth leaving her household and trayne at Warwik And so was on Wensday morning convied thorough the streates to the North gate & from thence thorough Mr Thomas ffishers grounds¹ & so by Woodloes the fairest way to Kenelworth where she rested at the charge of the L of Leycester from Wensday morning till Saturday night having in the mean tyme such princely sport made to her Ma^{ty} as could be devised On Saturday nyght very late her Ma^{ty} returned to Warwik And because she would see what chere my Lady of Warwik made she sodenly went into Mr. Thomas ffishers house² where my L of Warwik kept his house and there fynding them at supper satt downe awhile and after a little repast rose agayne leaving the rest at supper and went to visit the goodman of the house Thomas

¹ The grounds of the old Priory.

² The Priory, re-built after the Dissolution and recently destroyed by the owner.

ffisher who at that tyme was greviously vexid with the gowt who being brought into the galory end woold have knelid or rather fallen downe but her Mat^y wold not suffer it but wt most gracious woords comforted him so that forgetting or rather counterfeyting his Payne he wold in more hast than good sped be on horseback the next tyme of her going abrod w^{ch} was on Monday following when he rode wt the Lord Tresorer attending her Mat^y to Kenelworth" . . ."her Mat^y that Saturday nyght was lodgid agayn in the castell at Warwik where also she restid all Sonday whence it pleasid her to have the countrey people resorting to see the daunce in the Court of the castell her Mat^y beholding them out of her chambr wyndowe w^{ch} thing as it pleased well the countrey people so it seemed her Mat^y was much delightyd and made very myrry. That noon passed and supper done a shewe of fireworks preparyd for that p'pose in the templ felds was sett abroche."¹

As we know from this account written at the time, that by Her Majesty's wish, the country people resorted to the Castle to see the dancing and to see their Queen, it seems certain that the Shakespeares would be among them. People would be more likely to come from the Stratford side than from the Kenilworth and Coventry direction. Coventry was the most important place in the county, and Kings and Queens had been more frequently there. The fireworks arranged in the fields opposite to the Castle were on a tremendous scale, imitation fortresses having been erected, twelve battering pieces having been brought from London, "and Xij skore chambers [a sort of short cannon] brought also from the towne at the chardge of therle of Warwik. Thes pieces and Chambrs were by traynes fyred and so made a great noise as though it had bene a sore assault having some intermission in w^{ch} tyme therle of Oxford and his soldiers to the nomber of CC wt qualivers & harqbusues likewise gave divers assaults Then the fort shoting agayn and casting out divers fyres terrible to those that have not bene in like experience valiant to such as delighted therin and inded straung to them that understood it not for the wild fyre falling into the Ryver of

¹ *The Black Book of Warwick*, transcribed by Kemp, pp. 96 and 97.

Aven wold for a tyme lye still and than agayn rise & flye
abrode casting fourth many flashes and flambes whereat the
quenes mat^y tok great pleasure But whether by negligence or
otherwise" a ball of fire fell on a house at the end of the bridge
and burnt it and one or two others were "also fyred but
reskued by the diligent and carrefull helpe as well of therle
of Oxford Mr ffull Grevile & other gentlemen & Townes-
men w^{ch} repared thither in greater nombr than could be
orderid And no m^rvaile it was that so little harme was done
for the fire balles and squibbes cast upp did flye quiet over the
castell and into the myds of the towne falling downe some on
houses some in courts and baksides and some in the streats as
farre as almost of Saint Mary church to the great perill orells
great feare of the Inhbaitants of this borough. And so as by
what meanes is not yet knownen foure houses in the towne &
suburbes were on fyer at once whrof one had a ball cam
thorough both sides & made a hole as big as a mans head &
did no more harm This fyere appeased it was tyme to goo to
rest And in the next morning it pleasid her M^{ty} to have the
poore old man & woman that had there house burnt brought
unto her whom so brought her Mat^y recomfortid very much
And by her grcat bounty & other courtiers There was given
towards their losses that had taken hurt xxvli xij^s viij^d or
thereabouts w^{ch} was dispnsed to them accordingly On
Monday her maiesty taking g^t plesure in the sport she had
at Kenelworth wold thither agayn where she restid till the
saturday after and than from thence by charlecot she went
to the Lord comptons¹ & so forwards."² The writer gives no
account of the costumes, except those worn by the Warwick
Corporation and burgesses, but we know from contemporary
paintings and records that the Queen and all her followers
were arrayed on such occasions as richly as the Queen of
Sheba, or Solomon in all his glory. The Black Book does
give us a careful description of the Earl of Leicester's dress at
a very much less important occasion, in September 1571,

¹ Compton Wynnyates.

² *Black Book of Warwick*, p. 97. The greater part of the book was written
during twenty-seven years of the reign of Elizabeth by Master John Fisher,
Town Clerk. It was in great part transcribed and edited by Thomas Kemp
in 1898.

when he was staying at the Priory "That night being michilmas even it was signified that the said Earle of Leicester wold goo to the churche and there kepe the order of ffraunce viz^t of saint Michaell whereof he is a Companyon and for that cause his pleasure was signified to have the bailief and burgesse to wayt upon him." After a description of the Corporation procession "followid such of my Lords gentlemen and gentlemen of the shire as that day waytid uppon him, then after the gentlemen cam the s^rjant bering his macc then next after the s^rjaunt followed the Bailief alone in a gowne of skarlet After him cam Mr Willm Gorge that day Steward to my Lord Mr Robart Cristmas Tresorer to my Lord and Mr Thomas Dudley comptroller to my Lord all w^t white staves as officers all in one rank then next them folowid dragon purvant at armes and Clarenseaux King at Armes both in coat Armo^r And then cam my said Lord therle of Leycester by himself apparellid all in white his shoes of velvet his stoks of hose knitt silk his upper stoks of white velvit Lyned w^t cloth of silver his dowblet of silver his jerkin white velvet drawen with silver beautified with gold and precious stone his girdle and skabard white velvet his Roobe white satten embrowdered wth goold a foot brood very curiously his cap black velvet wth a white feth^r his colo^r of gold besett with precious stones and his garter about his legg of saint Georges order a sight worth the beholding And yet surely all this costly and curious apparell was not more to be praised then the comely gesture of the same Earle whose stature being reasonably was furnished wth all proporcion and Lynaments of his body and parts answerable."¹

The Warwick of Robert Arden and Richard Shakespeare was a small town, but it made a not unfitting background for these stately spectacles. Its natural features, apart from its place in history, gave it distinction. It was strongly placed, built on a rock of good building stone, but built—except for its churches, castle, and town-gates—entirely out of oak framing and clay-daubed panels. The County-town of its shire, full of beautiful Gothic houses, but without industries or commercial importance, it was happily seated above a fair stream

¹ *Black Book of Warwick*, p. 36.

whose encircling flood was at once a source of strength and of beauty. Rich in ancient buildings, the site of a superb and impregnable castle, the lordly home of great men, it had a fine Collegiate church exquisitely enriched, venerable from its associations, glorious from the heroes whose dust lay within it.

Like all medieval towns, it was no doubt insanitary, and was sometimes ravaged by the plague. Some of its streets were mean and most of its roofs were thatched, but its air was clear and the thin blue smoke from wood fires left no grime or soot.

Such was the town that Shakespeare the poet knew.

Like other ancient towns, the Warwick of the present is a mixture. It has retained delightful remains of beautiful buildings, but their numbers are dwindling and they are getting hemmed in with the modern and the commonplace.

The Warwick of the future one can only guess at, with foreboding and dread.

Chapter II

Snitterfield

IN every one of the numerous editions of Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, which were published in his lifetime, the following is the opening sentence. "In the reign of King Edward the Sixth there lived in Warwickshire a farmer named Richard Shakespeare, who rented a cottage and a small quantity of land at Snitterfield, an obscure village in that county."

It is true that Richard Shakespeare lived at Snitterfield, but all the other statements are misleading. He did not live in a cottage or occupy a small quantity of land. He farmed at least a hundred acres of Robert Arden's, and rented more land from the Warwick College. He lived in a messuage,¹ which was a very different thing to a cottage,² and the cottages on his farm would be occupied by farm labourers. It was not an obscure village, but was an important one with a very fine church, and in 1242 it had a market and fair.³ He was living there long before the reign of King Edward VI, remaining at Snitterfield, in fact, through four reigns and dying there in the days of Elizabeth.

¹ "unum messuagium cum pertinenciis in Snytterfeld."—*Misc. Doc.*, vol. ii, Birthplace Deeds, printed by Mrs. Stopes in *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 29. "Totum illud mesuagium cum suis pertinenciis in Snytterfylde, que nunc sunt in tenura Ricardi Shakespere."—*Misc. Doc.*, vol. ii. 79.

"Messuagers" were distinguished from cottagers and husbandmen.—N.E.D.

² The chief residence of John Baret of Bury is mentioned in his will as "my hefd place othir wyse calyd a mesuage, wiche I dwellyd in, with the gardynes, bernes, and duffous." His will and the chantry he built in the church at Bury St. Edmunds, in which his tomb has an effigy wearing a collar of SS., show him to be a person of consequence.—*Camden Soc.*, 1850, pp. 24 and 237.

³ Sidney Lee's *Stratford-on-Avon*, p. 119.

It is still a large village, straggling along the sides of a picturesque combe, or little valley, which, descending from a high plateau, nearly covered with woods, opens out on the north, into the comparatively flat and very fertile plain through which the Avon winds a sluggish and sinuous course. It is even now a very beautiful place, full of immense towering trees, and great park-like spaces of luxuriant turf; traversed by a clear streamlet and possessing, among many modern erections, a fair number of old timber houses. These, however, are in a minority, and being for the most part covered in plaster, their date is uncertain. The place is green and luxuriant Warwickshire at its fairest, and it would seem a beneficent fate that led Shakespeare's ancestors to this spot; though it is not to be supposed that four hundred years ago its aspect was the same, or even that it was equally attractive. Most probably it was not, though the buildings undoubtedly were much more picturesque and interesting than are those we now see, and there was an almost total absence of downright ugliness; for the most squalid cottage of timber and thatch can be agreeable to the eye, even when it is offensive to the nose.

It has been too often assumed by writers on South Warwickshire that everything old and picturesque must be as Shakespeare saw it, which is very far from being the truth. The main features of the surrounding landscape are for the most part the same; numerous woods, ancient roads, and many old farmsteads remain, but the changes wrought during the centuries that have elapsed—especially during the last—in the lives and surroundings of the inhabitants, in their habitations, and in their methods of work and play, have been so great and far-reaching that much patient investigation is necessary to discover, even on the very ground that the Shakespeares trod, what their Warwickshire was like and in what way they lived in it.

More than any other influence the changed methods of cultivation must have altered the look of things on the whole countryside, but in Snitterfield the change has not been so revolutionary as it would have been in a flat and arable district, because in the latter the open field method of tillage, which was almost universal in ancient times, gave an entirely different

character to that kind of country. Hardly any of these luxuriant hedges and tall hedgerow trees would then have been visible, except near houses and farmsteads; but the greater part of the landscape was occupied by wide tracts of unenclosed country which was held in common and cultivated in strips. This was known as "champaine" or "champion"; and the enclosed portions, which were few, were called "several." This district being hilly, and even more covered with woods than it is now, must have been chiefly "several." Enclosure had been proceeding slowly for centuries, and many Acts had been passed, before Richard Shakespeare's time, to check it.

In the first edition of John Fitzherbert's book of Husbandry in 1523, he says, "the lords have enclosed their demesne lands and meadows and kept them in severalty so that the tenants have no common with them therein. They have also given license to divers of their tenants to enclose part of their arable land and to take in new intakes or closes out of the commons, paying to their lords more rent therefore, so that the common pastures waxen less and the rents of the tenants waxen more." On the other hand, a later version of the same book in 1595, is strongly in favour of having as much of a farm "in several" as possible. Even if he does not own it, but has a farm only twenty years "it is lesse cost for him and more profit to quick-sette, hedge and ditch, then to have his Cattle goe before the Heardsmen" who would have to call for the animals and bring them back from the common fields at night. "For the Heard-man will have for euerie beast that he keepeth, two pence a quarter, or there abouts, and the Swineheard will have for euery swine a penny at the least, and then he must have a sheepheard of his owne or els hee will neuer thriue: then let him reckon meate, drinke, and wages for his Sheepheard, with the Heardman's hire, and the Swineheards hire, and these charges will double his rent, or nie it, except his Farme be above fortie shillings by the yeare: now see what his charges wil come to in three years, Let him lay out as much money in quick-setting¹ dytching, and hedging, and in three yeares he shall be discharged for evermore, and much of thys

¹ The Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe paid "For gettynge of towe thousande and thrie hundrethe whicsettes and for settynge the same xs."—Page 49.

labour hee and his seruants may doo with their owne handes, and saue much money, and then hath hee euery field in seuerall, and by the assent of the Lords & the tennants, euery neyghbour may change land with the other.”¹

When John Leland, in the reign of Henry VIII, rode through Warwickshire he wrote concerning this tract of country: “I lerynd at Warwike that the moste parte of the shire of Warwike, that lyeth as Avon river descendithe on the right hand or rype of it, is in Arden, (for soe is auncient name of that parte of the shire;) and the grownd in Arden is muche enclosyd, plentifull of gres [grass] but no great plenty of corne.”²

“The othar part of Warwyk-shire that lyethe on the lefte or ripe of Avon river, muche to the southe, is for the most parte champion, somewhat barren of wood, but very plentifull of corne.”³ And William Harrison in his *Description of England*, writing in 1577 (a few years after Richard Shakespeare’s death) of the mansion-houses of our country towns and villages, says, “which in champaine ground stand altogether by streets and ioining one to another, but in woodland soiles dispersed here and there, each one upon the seuerall grounds of their owners.”⁴ Also John Speed in his account written in 1610, says, “The South part from *Avon* (that runneth thorow the midst of this County) is called the *Feldon*, as more champion and tractable to be stirred for corn, w^{ch} yearly yeeldeth such plentifull harvest, that the husbandman smileth in beholding his pains, and the medowing pastures with their green mantles so imbrodred with flowers, that from Edg-hill we may behold another *Eden*, as *Lot* did the *Plain of Jordan* before that *Sodom* fell. The *Woodland* lieth upon the *North* of *Avon* so called in regard of the plenty of *Woods*; w^{ch} now are much thinner by the making of *Iron*, and the soil more churlish to yeeld to the *Plough*.”

¹ Fitzharberts Booke of Husbandrie now newlie corrected, amended, and reduced, into a more pleasing forme of English then before. Printed by I. R. for Edward White and are to be sold at his shoppe, at the little North doore of Paules Church, at the signe of the Gunne, Anno Dom. 1598.

² Leland’s *Itinerary*, Part V, p. 47, ed. Lucy T. Smith.

³ Ib.

⁴ *Description of England*, reprinted by New Shakespeare Soc., ed. Furnivall, vol. i, p. 237.

Snitterfield, therefore, being in woodland country has not changed so much since the days of the Shakespeares as a low-land village surrounded by corn-land would have done. And there was also another element to be considered, tending in the same direction.

In a parish where there was only one manor, the farmers lived in the village near to the manor-house, and their houses and barns stood, as Harrison says, altogether by streets, forming in fact the streets of the village, as they do in many villages of South Warwickshire to this day, the land they farm being at a distance. There it is possible to travel for miles between the villages without seeing a single house of any antiquity. Such parishes consisted chiefly of open corn-land comparatively devoid of trees. But at Snitterfield, where owners were numerous and woods were widespread, the farm-houses were scattered. The place in the time of Richard Shakespeare was not, as so many parishes were, one manor rented by tenants who tilled individual strips in various parts of the open arable land; there were two manors,¹ one of which was after 1546 owned by the Hales family, a member of which generally lived at the manor-house. The other belonged to the College of the Blessed Mary at Warwick; in addition to which Robert Arden of Wilmcote owned a solid block of more than a hundred acres. Moreover, according to a deed of exchange discovered by Mrs. Stopes at Shakespeare's Birthplace,² there were in 1575 other freeholders, who had agreed with the lord on certain exchanges of land, details of which are set forth in the deed. The names of a number of the fields are mentioned, most of which I have been able to identify on the spot. As such old field-names tend to become obsolete and forgotten, and as William Shakespeare must have been familiar with them, it may be worth while to give some indication of their whereabouts. The deed is dated January 23, 1575, and Robert Arden's land was then in the hands of Edward Cornewell, who had married one of his daughters, and Thomas Stringer who had married another.

It agrees that Bartholomew Hales and Mary his wife shall

¹ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 26.

² *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 17.

grant to the freeholders "the four yarde land" late in the occupation of the lord, lying in Gallow Hill Field, Rowley Field, and Brook Field, except as reserved for certain tenants in beast pasture and three-horse pasture during their several terms; and all the lands in the common called Griswold. . . . And as there are so many conies in Rowley Field, to the annoyance of the tenants, "they shall be allowed to kill, destroy or take the said conies wherever their corn shall grow."

Unfortunately the manor-house of the Hales family no longer exists. It stood on the south side of the parish church, and an avenue of old elms, which still reaches half-way across the park, formerly led to it. Some Georgian stables and the high walls of stone and brick which fence the kitchen garden from the village street indicate the site, and below the road, at the bottom of the little valley, are some of its ancient fish-stews. It was without doubt a half-timber building, when the Shakespeares lived at Snitterfield. The church which stood near by would be the only stone building in the village, and remains externally very much as Richard knew it, but within it has suffered much from restoration, from crude stained glass and other modern changes. The nave, chancel, and aisles are of the fourteenth century. The huge and massive tower, as wide as the nave, has a base of about the same date, severely plain and (except for a west window with a door under it) almost without openings; but the top storey of early fifteenth-century work has a pair of large and beautiful belfry windows in each face. When Sir William Dugdale was writing his *History of Warwickshire* in the middle of the seventeenth century there was in a north window a full-length figure of Bishop Cantilupe with mitre and crozier, and in the east window his coat of arms with those of the Clintons.

If we approach the village from Bearley, as I generally do, we ascend a lane through oak woods, much thinned by the Great War, with delightful peeps of wooded hills, and a field or two here and there. At the top of the ascent the plateau is covered with woods for two miles (celebrated for an abundance of flowers and much beloved of nightingales), and after passing through them the lane emerges at a farm-house now quite modern, but built on the common called Griswold

and still known as Griswold farm. After another half-dozen fields Snitterfield is seen in a long hollow below us. An inn, school-house, Village Hall, and chapel, all modern, are the most prominent features in this, the least interesting part of the village, where several roads meet. If we ascend the one to the right the cottages become fewer and older till in the open country the "Wolds" is reached where lived the Cookes family for some centuries, though only the farm-buildings have much air of antiquity. But if at the school-house instead of turning to the right, one goes straight up the main village street which climbs out to the southern edge of the combe, past some thatched cottages, past the last house, and then past thick masses of trees, one arrives on the high road to Warwick, close to the stone cross that commemorates the local men who fought and died in the Great War.

From this spot a noble prospect suddenly opens out, and half Warwickshire seems to be spread below us. One cannot quite see Warwick, six miles to the left, and on our right hand Stratford is hidden by the buttressed slopes of Welcombe and Clopton; but straight across the plain, the innumerable hedge-rows, with elms and oaks in ranks and masses (through which the Avon flows unseen), stretch away past Charlecote Park, by Hampton Lucy, Alveston, and many more of "hamlets brown and dim-discovered spires," to the distant Cotswolds and the Edge Hills.

The steeply descending slope of rich turf below the road is the close called the Park-pit which the lord of the manor gave up when Shakespeare was eleven years old, and as the old-fashioned mansion below, which is half buried in grand old trees, is Ingon Grange, which with its park occupies the remainder of the hillside, "Ingon Gate" must be close at hand. Away on our left is "the Hill Field where the windmill standeth" and where it continued to stand till fifty years ago on a spur of the hill hanging over the road from Stratford to Warwick. Leaving the War Memorial and turning south-west towards Stratford, dense trees on all sides shut in the road; and in a hundred yards or so a lane plunges down the hill on our left. At this corner is Gallow Hill, doubtless the site of the old Gallow Hill Field mentioned in the deed which was

found by Mrs. Stopes. Passing the top of this lane, in another half-mile is another lane, below which is Hollow Meadow. "The Common Leys lying between Hollow Meadow and Ingon Gate shooting up by Stratford Way Pit to the ground of William Cookes" could not have been far away, as all these place-names are close hereabouts, and "The Wolds" where William Cookes lived, stands only two fields higher up, due north. Rowley Field where the conies were so numerous we shall see later.

By dint of much patient labour and endless enthusiasm J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps and Mrs. C. C. Stopes succeeded in finding a number of documents which gave valuable facts concerning the property which was owned by Robert Arden, Shakespeare's maternal grandfather, and rented by Richard Shakespeare, his father's father, but hitherto nobody has been able to say where it was situated. Halliwell-Phillipps tried repeatedly to find it but says finally, "The locality of his residence is unknown."¹

The earliest known record relating to the farm is a document in the Birthplace dated 16th of Henry VII (1501) transferring some eighty acres of land from John Mayowe to six feoffees, two of whom are Thomas Arden and his son Robert. But Mrs. Stopes found several other deeds relating to the same property (some of which Halliwell-Phillipps had missed and some that he had misunderstood) and printed extracts from them in a volume of essays and articles called *Shakespeare's Environment*. In the first of these documents (that of 1501) one boundary of the land is given as a lane called "Merellane." In another deed of 1503 it is called "Marye Lane," and in a third dated 1504 "Mary's Lane."

In studying the subject on the spot, and on large-scale Ordnance maps, I noticed that a farm on the north-east side of Snitterfield is called "Marraway," and it occurred to me that it might have been so called from a lane that passes near it having been known as Mary Way, the word "way" being a very usual term for a lane in these parts. Bearing in mind that Mary Knowl near Ludlow is always pronounced "Marri-nole," and thinking of Marylebone, St. Mary Axe pronounced

¹ *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 208.

"Simmery Axe," and other instances, it seemed highly probable that this was the "Merellane" and "Mary Lane" of the old manuscripts. Enquiry on the spot showed that this lane, which descends from high ground at Norton Lindsay, and passes on across the main road to Warwick, is still known as Marraway Lane. Also on hunting up an old parchment called "The Award of the Roads," which is in the custody of the Clerk to the County Council, I found it had the same name as far back as 1761.

This gave me one boundary of the farm and I was able, after some blundering,¹ to find two of the other boundaries exactly, and the fourth roughly. The first document is a deed of conveyance of a certain messuage and the lands, etc., belonging thereto, from John Mayowe to Thomas Arden. Their situation is thus described: "which messuage aforesaid was formerly William Mayowe's and afterwards John Mayowes, and is situated between the land of John Palmer on the one side, and a certain lane there called Merellane on the other side in breadth, and it reaches in length from the King's highway there to a certain Rivulet according to the metes and bounds there made."² It is extremely probable that there had been in early times a shrine or cross to the Blessed Virgin, from which Mary Way took its name.³ Mary Way lane is evidently a piece of tautology such as often occurs in place-names, through succeeding generations having misunderstood the name used by their predecessors. Avon, for instance, is a British word meaning river. To the aboriginal inhabitants it was simply the river, but to later invaders it was the river Avon.

Mrs. Stopes also found at the Record Office a commission which was set up in 1581 to hear the claim of a grandson of

¹ Caused by following the much condensed extracts given in *Shakespeare's Environment*, instead of going to the document itself, or to Mrs. Stopes's copy of it in *Shakespeare's Family*.

² "quod quidem mesuagium predictum quondam fuit Willelmi Mayowe et postea Johannis Mayowe et situatum est inter terram Johannis Palmer ex parte una et quandam venellam ibidem vocatam Merellane ex parte altera in latitudine et extendit se in longitudine a via Regia ibidem usque ad quendam Rivulum, secundum metas et divisas ibidem factas."—*Miscellaneous Documents of Stratford-on-Avon*, vol. ii, No. 83.

³ Merevale in North Warwickshire is a corruption of Mary Vale.

William Mayowe to the ownership of the same property. In this the dwelling of Richard Shakespeare is described as "lying between the house which was sometime the house of William Palmer on the one side and a lane called Merrel Lanc on the other, and doth abut on the High Street."¹ It is sometimes called a messuage and sometimes a tenement, and one witness said that "it abuts itself against the High Street." This one might take to mean that it formed part of the main street of a compact village, but bearing in mind the scattered character of the villages which were on what Harrison calls "woodland soiles" and that the houses were "dispersed here and there, each one upon the seuerall grounds of their owners"; and also that at Snitterfield great changes in the distribution of the houses have occurred in the course of centuries, it becomes evident that there is little guidance to be got from this word "Street." In the earlier documents the property is always described as extending to the King's Highway (*Via Regia*), a road which formed one boundary of the farm.

Having convinced myself that Marraway is a corruption of Mary Way, and that the modern Marraway Lane is the ancient Mary Lane, two of the other boundaries of the farm, the rivulet and the King's Highway, became at once apparent. There is only one rivulet at Snitterfield, the one which comes down from the high ground beyond "The Wolds" and runs, much reduced now by the Stratford water works, through the village, past a ford and foot-bridge, and along the bottom of a steep little valley below the church and vicarage. Finally, at the north-east corner of the parish it joins the Sherbourne Brook, which a mile or two farther turns due south, crosses the Warwick road at Longbridge and delivers its "tribute wave" to the Avon at Barford.

The King's Highway must have been the main road to Warwick, which as a glance at the accompanying plan will show, crosses Marraway Lane at right-angles.

Should any Shakespearean pilgrim wish to seek the actual site of Richard Shakespeare's house let him take the road that goes eastwards past Snitterfield Church and follow it beyond

¹ *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 32. The witness, John Henley, testified (in 1582) that he had known the messuage for sixty years, that is since 1516.

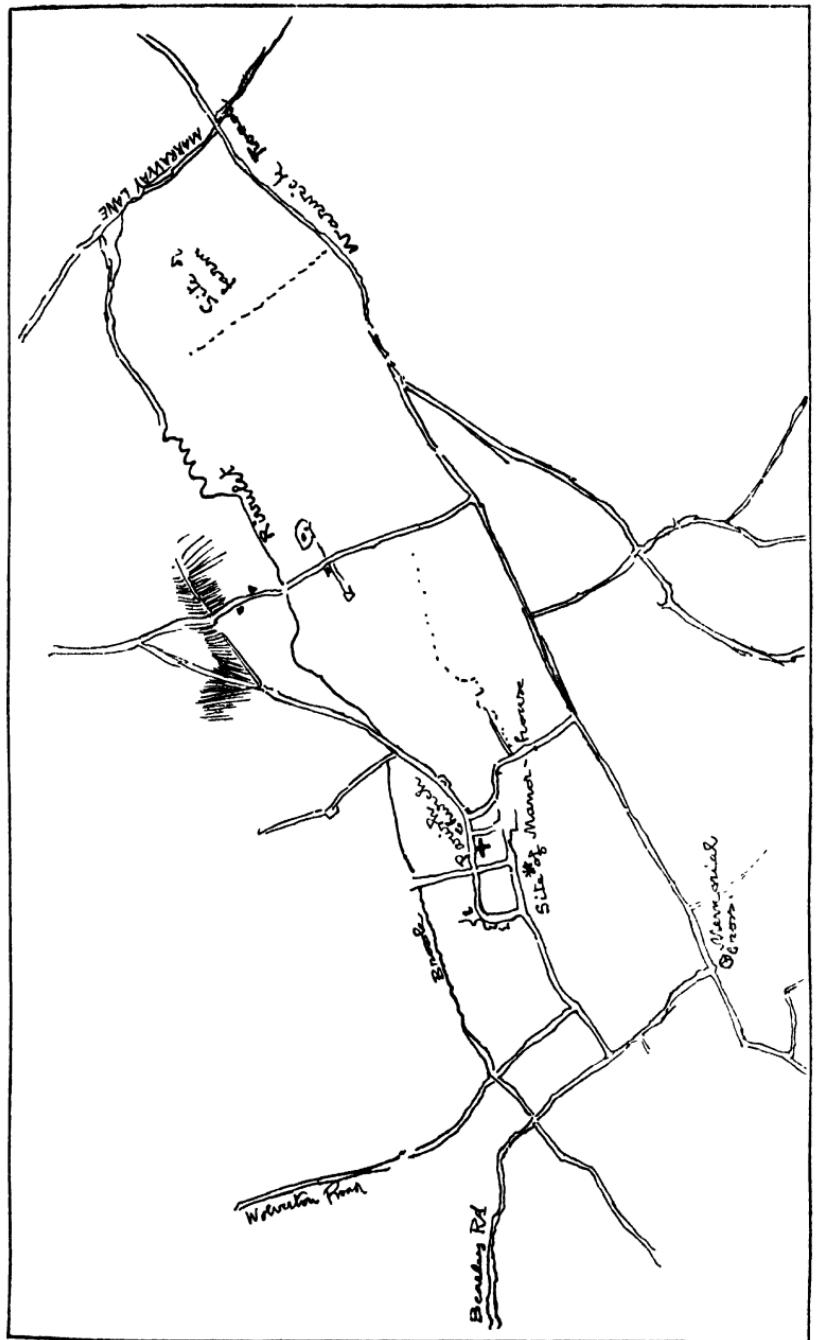


FIG. 3.—Plan of Snutterfield

an extension of the grave-yard on his right. Here there is a fork in the road, the prong on the right leading south-east to join the Warwick road. The one to the left plunges down beneath big trees and ragged hedges past some old half-timbered cottages into a diminutive but charming valley where there is a bridge over the brook and the remains of a flood-gate for sheep-washing. Rowley Field, where the conies were so numerous, is on the left of the lane and the farm of the poet's grandfather beyond the brook on the right.

Between the two prongs of the above-mentioned fork is a modern brick house occupied by the village saddler, who also uses an old half-timbered building near by for various out-buildings. There is a local tradition connecting this last with the Shakespeares. It is probable, however, that the idea arose in modern times, and was based on the discovery by Halliwell-Phillipps that two of the neighbouring fields had been in the occupation of Henry Shakespeare, the poet's uncle. He found that at a Court Leet held at Snitterfield on October 22, 1596, "Henry Shaxper" was fined "ijs for having a *diche* betweene Redd Hill and Burman in decaye for want of repayringe."¹ This building Halliwell-Phillipps considered "may very likely occupy the site of Henry's residence."² I have carefully examined it, and find that though it is built of very thick beams, some of them handsomely moulded, it is, in plan and construction, not early enough for a house of the sixteenth century, but has been built in later times from old Gothic materials.

From this point the right-hand branch of the lane leads, as shown on the plan at Fig. 3, into the Warwick Road, and a green meadow on the left is still known as "Burmans" as it was known in the days when Henry Shakespeare neglected to repair its ditches; and a very extensive ploughed field of red marl—with a long hog-backed piece of rising ground covered with fir-trees in the midst thereof—is still known as "Red-hill." About half a mile farther our lane joins the Warwick Road at right-angles, and if the pilgrim aforesaid will turn left-handed towards the county town, a few hundred yards of grass-lined and tree-shaded road with numerous hedgerow trees which have not yet attracted the destructive ravages of

¹ *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 212, 1890.

² *Ib.* p. 209.

the local authorities¹ will bring him to that part of the Via Regia or King's Highway which formed the southern edge of Richard Shakespeare's farm. The next lane on the left is Mary Way or Marroway Lane, its western boundary; and across the fields due north, if the weather is favourable, the line of the rivulet is easily seen, even when summer is leafiest.

This, then, being the site of Richard Shakespeare's house, of which no trace remains, is it possible to say what the house was like?

I believe that it is. The house of a Warwickshire farmer, who was a man of any substance and lived in a messuage, was—in 1501, when this Snitterfield home is first recorded—of a regular standard type, which sometimes in the fourteenth and frequently in the fifteenth and earlier part of the sixteenth century was usual in the midland and southern districts of England wherever oak timber was plentiful; and which is still to be found all the way down through Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Surrey to Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire.

The kind of dwelling that I have in mind is shown at Fig. 4 from a Stratford example and at Fig. 7 from one at Henley-in-Arden. It is a type which has often been sketched and photographed (especially in Kent, where such houses are very numerous), but very seldom understood. The great mansions of England have been most elaborately illustrated and described. Much study has been devoted to the smaller manor-houses, their structure and history; also the home of the medieval cottar has been admirably explained by Mr. S. O. Addy in *The Evolution of the English House*; but the dwelling of the husbandmen and yeoman-farmer class, though often illustrated and written about, are nearly always erroneously and misleadingly described as "cottages." In studying such buildings one has to remember that they were built by a smaller race than the men of to-day, a race which were not such fools as to build doorways that they could not walk through upright. Their clothing and armour is much too small for the men of the

¹ But since the deaths of Sir G. O. Trevelyan and his wife a great deal of this land has changed hands and the trees have in many places been felled.

limits, the bounds of which in the fifteenth century had to accommodate the well-to-do farmer, the yeoman—and sometimes the bailiffs and even the owners of manors—over most of the country wherever oak was plentiful and stone was scarce.

The medieval farmer had need of a certain kind of home, the medieval carpenter had certain traditional ways of providing

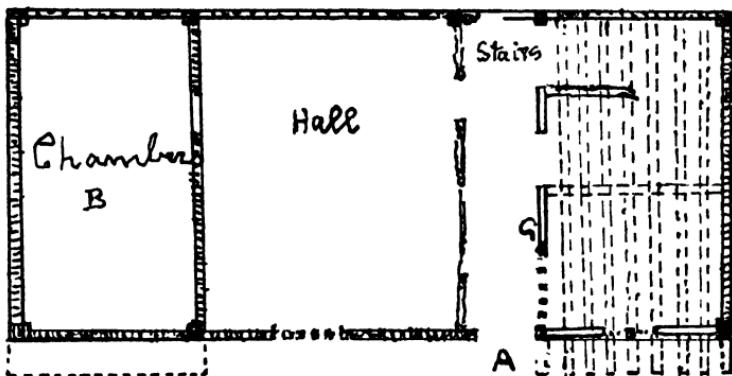


FIG. 5.—Plan of Gothic house

him with it. There had to be a hall such as the one in the plan (Fig. 5) which must have no other storey over it, but remain open to the roof-timbers. It was the only room with a fire; as the house had no chimneys and the fire was on the floor, a space being specially paved for it, the smoke escaping through a louvre in the roof, and also by an unglazed window in each of two opposite walls. There was a chamber B, at one end of the house with another chamber over it, called the solar, and at the other end of the hall was an entrance passage C (corresponding to the "screens" of an ancient college. Opening from it were the buttery and the pantry, with a third door giving access by a staircase of solid blocks to an upper chamber over it.

Of this kind of house there are fortunately some very good examples in and near Stratford. The usual and most characteristic sort were oblong in plan like those photographed at Figs. 6 and 7, with the upper storey overhanging about two



FIG. 7.—Gothic house, Henley in Arden

feet at each end of the front of the house, which left a recess of the same depth in the centre. In most instances this recess had a curved oak brace at each end, and an over-arching cove or soffit at the top carried on oak ribs which, supporting the eaves, formed altogether a remarkable feature, the peculiarities of which have puzzled me for a very long time. Except in an article in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, by Mr. Robert S. Weir, about a house of this kind near Gravesend, in Kent, I have never seen any explanation of this peculiar recess. It was really due to the presence, in the middle of the building of the open hall, which in order to leave room for the smoke and flames from the fire, had no storey over it, but continued up into the roof. The upper chambers at each end of the house were made more roomy by carrying the massive joists of the floor over the framing of the front wall. The beams of the upper storey rested on the ends of these joists, so that the front face of the upper chambers projected two feet beyond the front of the house. Therefore, as the front walls of the hall ran straight up in a line with the main body of the house, it would (if roofed in the usual manner with the ends of the rafters resting on its outer edge) have had its roof sloping at a different pitch to that of the rest of the building, an awkward arrangement, especially with thatch. The manner of dealing with this difficulty varied somewhat in different localities. In all of them the line of the eaves was continued across the recess, so as to sustain the ends of the rafters at the same angle as the rest of the roof, but in Warwickshire the eaves were supported in two ways; firstly, by the curved wind-braces at each end of the recess, and secondly, by the oak-ribbed coving as shown. In Herefordshire the curved wind-braces are always absent and the ribbed coving is on a much increased scale, giving more room for smoke in the upper part of the hall and imparting a very singular design to the houses. In the southern counties, especially in Kent, the curved wind-braces were always used and the coving is often totally absent.

Here it may be desirable to explain that a louvre was a small roof erected over a hole left in the ridge timbers of a house, through which the smoke from the hall-fire found its way out. The better ones would have louvre boards to keep out the rain.

It is very probable that in the time of Richard Shakespeare there were more louvres in Snitterfield than chimneys. A long Latin document in the Guildhall at York records a dispute between the tilers and the wrights or carpenters, and shows how very numerous such smoke-louvres were in 1425. The two crafts had submitted themselves to the judgment of the mayor and councillors, of and about the making of new louvres which were called "draughtlouvers." Eventually it was decided that the tilers of houses should generally place the louvres on the houses, whether they might be of their own making or the making of the carpenters; but before louvres were placed on houses they were to be examined by the searchers of the carpenters. The best louvre was to be sold for 10d. and no more, but a second louvre of smaller size might be sold for 8d. and another of the third size for 6d., whether made by the men of the one craft or the other.¹

A chamber with a chimney was looked upon in the Middle Ages as a luxury. In the fourteenth century a Worcestershire poet, William Langland,² complained (in *Piers the Plowman's Crede*): "Now hath eche ryche a rule to caten by him sclef In a privee parlor," "or in a chambre wyth a chimney and leave the chief hal."

The house in the Rother Market at Stratford on Avon (illustrated at Fig. 8) had been for many years inhabited by three or four families, and was, early in 1928, quite empty and about to be repaired. The corporation being the owners, I had pointed out to the Borough Surveyor the great interest of the fabric and the advice of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was asked. Being requested by the Society to supervise the work, I had exceptional opportunities for studying the building.

It has what is now very rare, the original unglazed window of the hall, which had been plastered up in the hall, as shown in the photograph (Fig. 8) under the recess. It is divided by three perfectly square plain mullions into four narrow openings, and had been closed by a wooden shutter. Also the

¹ *Ordinacio pro tilers et wrytis, York Memorandum Book*, Surtees Society, vol. 125, p. 174.

² We can see the Malvern Hills from Bearley.



FIG. 8.—Gothic house in Rother Street (showing plastered-up window in upper part of recess)

open roofed hall was easily accessible, though as generally happens it had been divided later by a floor into two storeys. The roof must always have been severely plain, and has now hardly any of its original rafters. One or two which remain are much blackened with smoke, as are also the beams of the walls where the whitewash has fallen off. When the plaster was removed from the ceiling of the room at the north end of the house it became possible to find the site of the original staircase, and to make out the exact plan of the Gothic house. The entrance was at A on the plan (see Fig. 5) and just inside, a row of mortice-holes in a beam C showed the position of the Buttery and Pantry. In the passage the timbers were very much stained by the smoke which had escaped through the hall-screen on the left, but beyond the row of mortice-holes they were quite clean, owing to the presence of the wall, since destroyed, which kept the smoke from the Buttery and Pantry. It is obvious from the timbers that the chamber above originally hung over the lower storey, in the same manner as the one at the other end of the house does still (see Fig. 5). We had hoped to get rid of a passage which cuts off part of the hall, but the owners of the adjoining Chapel refused an arrangement that would have made it possible, so the hall has two modern encroachments, a gallery which is part of the floor which had been inserted to make an additional bedroom and get access to others.¹ The house is nevertheless an excellent example of the yeoman's dwelling of the fifteenth century and one of the most precious buildings in the town.

A few yards farther along the Rother Market is a similar house but much mutilated in modern times. The front has been mostly rebuilt with brick, and only the timber framing of the bed-chambers, which once projected over the lower part of the front, remains visible. There is, however, in a sketch made about the year 1780, and printed by Halliwell-Phillipps in *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, an old drawing on a small scale of this same building. The print is entitled, "The Rother Market and its streamlet." The house in question is on the extreme left of the print and shows nearly all the timbers of a

¹ Mr. E. I. Fripp has taken this gallery to be ancient. It is a piece of a modern floor left during the late repairs.

rather small Gothic dwelling, including the central recess with its curved oak wind-braces. Internally the house has now the aspect of two modern cottages, but I had the good fortune to pass it one morning when the Corporation workmen had removed the roofing-tiles, and on ascending the ladders had an excellent view of the untouched Gothic roof timbers of the hall. The brown soot of the wood smoke from the central hearth, which used to be on the floor below, is still hanging thickly upon them, showing that the later ceiling had been put across at the level of the wall-plates when the original open-hall arrangement was given up and the chimneys were first built. The Rev. William Harrison, in 1580, says: "There are old men yet dwelling in the village wherc I remaine which haue noted three things to be maruellousie altered in England within their sound remembrance. One is the multitude of chimnies latelie erected, whereas in their young daies there were not aboue two or threc if so manie, in most uplandish townes of the realme (the religious houses and manour places of their lords alwaies excepted and peraduentre some great personages)¹ but ech one made his fire against a reredosse in the hall, where he dined and dressed his meat."² Comparing his own time with the past, he says: "Now have we manie chimnies and yet our tenderlings complaine of rheumes, catarhs and poses. Then had we none but reredosses; and our heads did never ake. For as the smoke in those daies was supposed to be a sufficient hardning for the timber of the house, so it was reputed a far better medicine to keepe the good man and his familie from the quacke or pose, wherewith, as then very few were oft acquainted."³

¹ That is parsonages.

² *Description of England*, ed. Furnivall, pp. 239 and 240.

³ Ib., p. 338.

Chapter III

Who was Richard Shakespeare of Snitterfield?

MOST biographers of Shakespeare seem to have considered themselves bound to print all the various instances of that name which have been discovered; no matter how early the records, or at what distance from Warwickshire they may occur. I believe, however, that these remote examples, so far as a pedigree of the poet is concerned, are really negligible, and that the recording of them only tends to confuse the issue. And this for several reasons. Firstly, because the name Shakespeare, having been given for the performance of feats of arms, might arise in any locality—in the days before surnames had become fixed—by being granted to anyone who showed himself worthy of it. And secondly, because at such early dates the names would not have become permanent sire-names, so would not descend from father to son.¹ They would not, therefore, except by an improbable accident, have anything whatever to do with the poet. Moreover, the conditions of life and of travel in the early Middle Ages were such that Shakespeares so far away as Kent, Essex, Carlisle, or Ireland would not be at all likely to be his ancestors or relations. On the other hand, it is my opinion that the Warwickshire Shakespeares, great and small, rich and poor, were all more or less related to the Poet,

¹ Of course the names of important territorial families such as those of Ferrers or Arden, were inherited with estates from generation to generation, but until nearly the end of the fourteenth century those of ordinary people were generally the names of individuals not of families; for instance "Rob Dowk, pouchmaker, fil. Willelmi de Schirburn, cordwaner."—*Freemen of York, 1377*, vol. i, p. 76.

because they, and he, were all descended from the same ancestor.

In the fourteenth century surnames were beginning to become permanent, and to descend unaltered, even in middle-class and lower stratifications of society, to succeeding generations of the same family. The various documents relating to this part of Warwickshire which have been found in old manor-houses, churches, libraries, and other collections public and private, show constant traces of a family which is first heard of twelve miles to the north of Stratford in the last years of the fourteenth century.¹ This family originating in a certain Adam Shakespeare and multiplying in various branches, spread in the course of two centuries over many of the surrounding parishes, but became most numerous in those of Wroxall and Rowington. Like the fairy-rings that we see in old pastures, they spread from a primary centre and travelled farther and farther afield, eventually dying out in some places and scattering in others, so that their original line of descent has become obscured and forgotten.

It is on record that the name Shakespeare had a military significance. The spear was from Saxon times to the early Middle Ages the chief weapon of all soldiers. In Anglo-Saxon, the common, poetic name of the soldier was *asc-berend*, i.e. spear-bearer.²

In 1605 Verstegan records that "Breakspear, Shakespeare and the like, have bin surnames imposed upon the first bearers of them for feates of arms."³ Camden also says: "Some are named from that which they commonly carried as—Long-sword, Broad-spear, and in some such respect Break-spear,

¹ There is a hazy note in the Rev. J. Hunter's papers in the British Museum (Addit. MSS. 24, 484, art. 246) which suggests that a Thomas Shakespeare had left his goods and fled at an early date from Coventry, but Mr. J. P. Yeatman says (p. 133, *The Gentle Shakespeare*), "a search at the Record office for the indictment has failed to produce any evidence whatever," though he found the names of two bailiffs that Mr. Hunter mentioned in the same connection, and nobody seems to have been able to find any since.

² E. L. Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, 1872, p. 312. At Bidford, seven miles away, an Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been excavated recently and in the graves of the men were nearly always found the remains of a spear.

³ Verstegan's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, 1605, p. 312.

Shakespeare, Shot-bolt."¹ The Polydoron states: "Names were first questionlesse given for distinction, facultie, consanguinity, desert, quality—as Armstrong, Shakespeare, of high quality."²

In this connection one may bear in mind the existence of a draft which remains in Herald's College, and was prepared under the direction of William Dethick, Garter King of Arms, granting the poet's father's request for a coat of arms, and stating that he, Garter, had been by credible report informed that the applicants "parentes and late Antecessors were for theire faithfull and valeant service advanced and rewarded by the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh of famous memorie."³ Thomas Fuller, in his account of Shakespeare, says that he was "Martiall in the Warlike sound of his Surname (whence some may conjecture him of a Military extraction) Histri-vibrans or Shake-speare." Spencer also wrote of him:

"Whose Muse, full of high thought's invention
Doth like himself heroically sound."⁴

Mrs. Stopes says of the name, "That it referred to feats of arms may be argued from analogy. Italian heraldry illustrates a name with an exactly similar meaning and use in the Italian language, that of Crollalanza."⁵

In twenty-five of the villages on the north side of Stratford many traces have been discovered of Shakespeares who were living there, from the end of the fourteenth century down to dates long after the death of the poet. There are very definite indications in the documents that record them, especially in their wills and epitaphs, that a great many of them were related to one another, but as already indicated, it is my belief that these *Warwickshire* Shakespeares (including the poet William) were all more or less related to one another, because they were all descended from a certain Adam Shakespeare, son and heir to Adam de Oldediche of Temple Balsall.

¹ *Camden's Remains*, 7th impression, 1674, p. 161.

² *Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, vol. i, 266. Some of the above instances have been quoted by various writers on Shakespeare.

³ But see p. 17, Stope's *Shakespeare's Family*.

⁴ *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, 1595.

⁵ *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 1.

Towards the end of the last century the Rev. H. Norris, Roman Catholic chaplain at Tamworth, wrote an account of Baddesley Clinton Hall, the venerable moated mansion of the

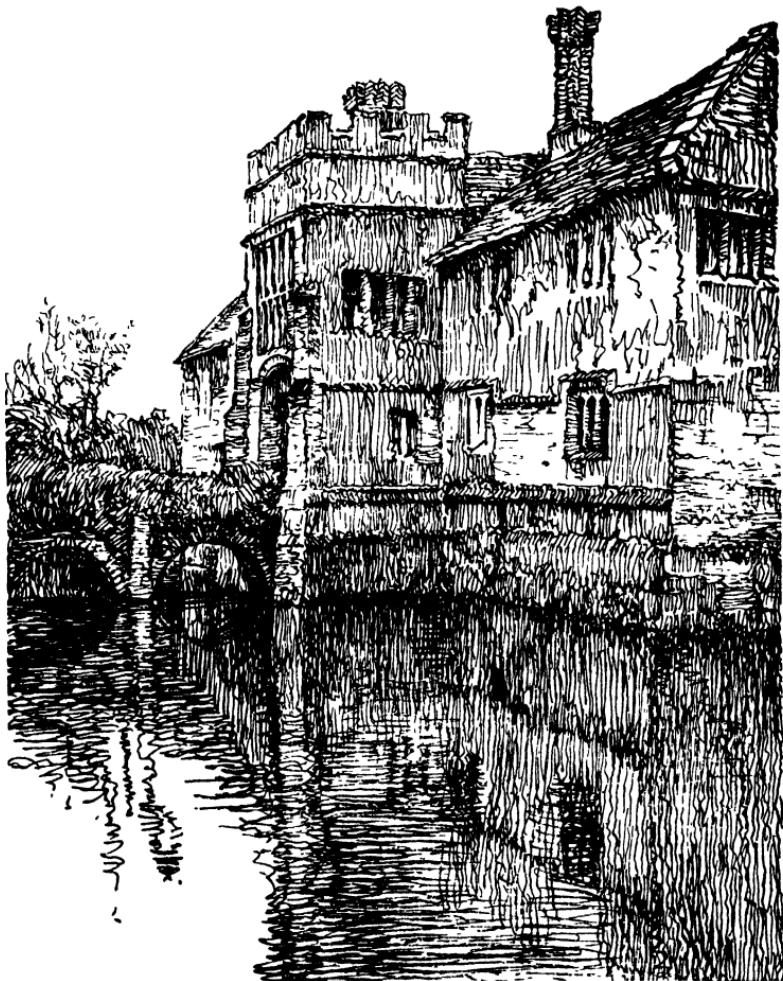


FIG. 9.—The entrance tower, Baddesley Clinton

Warwickshire branch of the great family of Ferrers. In the course of his searches among the manuscripts that have accumulated there during five or six centuries, he discovered references to the Warwickshire Shakespeares as far back as

the year 1389. These he described in a letter to *Notes and Queries*.¹

Father Norris said: "I find from original documents that on November 24, 1389 (13 Ric. II), Adam Shakespere, who is described as 'filius et heres Ade' de Oldediche,' held (and probably then first obtained) lands within the manor of Baddesley Clinton, and held them by military service. This was in the days of John Fouke, second husband of Johanna de Clinton, who was one of the coheiresses of Thomas de Clinton, lord of Baddesley, who died about 1335. . . . Adam Shakespere who died in 1414, leaving a widow Alice and a son and heir John, then under age, so that his birth must have taken place subsequent to 1393, and about four years after his father had settled in Baddesley Clinton. On attaining his majority he succeeded to his father's lands in Baddesley and was holding them in 1425 (3 Hen. VI) and as late as 1441 (20 Hen. VI); but I have found no record of his death. By whom he was succeeded is not clear, but there is a strong probability that Ralph and Richard Shakspeare who held lands in Baddesley were his sons. These two brothers in 1465 (5 Edw. IV) held certain lands in Baddesley called Great Chedwyns, which are situate in the eastern portion of the manor and adjoin Wroxhall; and it is therefore far from improbable that this Richard was the founder of the Wroxhall branch of the family, since no further mention of his name has been found in Baddesley. In 1464 Ralph had a wife Joanna, and these probably are they who were commemorated in the Gild Register at Knowle in the following record about that date:—'Radulphus Schakespere et Isabella uxor ejus, et pro anima Johannae uxoris primae.' And possibly the succeeding record 'Ricardus Schakespere de Wroxall et Margeria uxor ejus,' refers to this Richard formerly of Baddesley Clinton, and later of Wroxall.

"The issue of the marriage of Ralph and Johanna were two daughters and coheirs, Elizabeth and Isolda, who were married respectively to Robert Huddespit and Robert Rakley. Ralph Shakspere was living on April 17, 1493, but was dead before April 14, 1496, when his lands in Baddesley were divided between Huddespit and Rakley, his sons-in-law. On December

¹ Eighth series, vol. vii, 501.

14, 1506, Robert Huddespit was dead, and his relict Elizabeth in possession of his lands. And what is of special interest is the fact that the lands (or at least a portion of them) which Elizabeth Huddespit held in 1506 were the same as those possessed 117 years previously by Adam Shakespere, son and heir of Adam de Oldediche in 1389.

"The foregoing particulars serve in no way to solve the problem of William Shakespeare's immediate ancestry, but they certainly testify to an earlier settlement of the family in Warwickshire than has hitherto been discovered, and they clearly point to Temple Balsall and Baddesley Clinton as the earliest known residences of the family whence in all probability an offshoot took root in Wroxhall."¹

Mr. John Pym Yeatman, who had seen the letter to *Notes and Queries* but did not print it, says that he "attempted in vain to get further information from Baddesley."² He also says that he "appealed to the Rev. Mr. Norris to give him an opportunity to inspect the records upon which he founded his letter to *Notes and Queries*, from which in all probability, if properly and fully abstracted, a clear pedigree might be deduced."³ In this Mr. Yeatman was probably mistaken. Father Norris was a careful and enthusiastic antiquary, and I am persuaded that if there had been such information as Mr. Yeatman suggested, among the Baddesley records, Father Norris would have made use of them. He had every opportunity of doing so as he often stayed at Baddesley Clinton Hall, and his book on the manor and church, with his account therein of the Ferrers family, proves that he had most thoroughly examined the records there. The book was published in 1897, and as he did not die until nine years later, there was plenty of time to make known any Shakespearian matter that he might have found in addition to the discoveries he had described in *Notes and Queries*. The statements he made there he repeated in the above book as a footnote to his account of Henry Ferrers the Antiquary, without adding a word more to it.

¹ *Notes and Queries*, 8th series, vol. viii, p. 501.

² *The Gentle Shakspeare*, p. 130.

³ *Ib.*, p. 132.

In past centuries there may have been evidences at Baddesley Clinton relating to the early history of the Shakespeare family, because from 1549 to 1633 Henry Ferrers lived at the hall and was a great collector of MSS. relating to old Warwickshire families, but many of them are in the College of Arms, others in the British Museum, and some in the Bodleian Library. Eight volumes of his collections, which are believed to have been lent to Sir William Dugdale for use in his *History of Warwickshire* and which were never returned,¹ found their way into the collection of Mr. Staunton, of Longbridge, between Stratford and Warwick. Unfortunately his collection, which was bought for the Birmingham Reference Library, was burnt there in the year 1879. It is, however, some consolation to remember that Halliwell-Phillipps had access to the Staunton Collection before it left Longbridge, and that as he was an indefatigable grubber among manuscripts, there is little probability that any of Shakespearean interest that may have lurked in those eight volumes escaped him.

After the death of Marmion Edward Ferrers in August 1884, his widow married his life-long friend, Edward Heneage Dering, and continued to live at Baddesley Clinton Hall, for which delightful old manor-house they both had a great affection. It was at that time, during the eighties and nineties of the last century, that the Rev. H. Norris was studying the Baddesley MSS., and I often saw him there. I have reason to believe that the records were then methodically arranged, and could have been comparatively easy to consult, but Mrs. Dering after her second husband's death lived at Baddesley till her own decease in 1923 at the age of ninety-four, and being completely absorbed in her favourite occupation of painting religious pictures, the house was left very much in the hands of servants.

In the years that have passed since the death of Mrs. Dering, changes have had to be made there to bring the ancient mansion up to the standards of modern comfort and convenience, and the records have been placed in old carved chests, without order or cataloguing and in great confusion. Therefore, though the late Captain Ferrers very kindly gave

¹ Mrs. Dering, widow of Marmion E. Ferrers, told me of this.

me facilities for examining them, the task of ascertaining from them if any more light can be thrown on Shakespeare's pedigree would be one requiring a great expenditure of time and labour, which I am not able to give to it. Moreover, it is apparent from the details which Father Norris published that the poet could not be descended from that branch of the Shakespeare family which remained on their Baddesley Clinton holding, because their property in that parish had passed away for lack of male heirs to the families of Huddespit and Rackley. It is therefore to other sources we have to turn in the search for Richard Shakespeare's ancestors, and of these sources the most important is the Register of the Guild of St. Anne at Knowle, already alluded to in the quotation from Father Norris.

In the reign of Henry IV a very wealthy ecclesiastic, Walter Cook, induced the Lady Elizabeth, widow of John Lord Clinton, to help him to found this Guild at a hamlet which was then, and for centuries after, a chapelry in the parish of Hampton-in-Arden, four miles from Baddesley Clinton and about fourteen miles to the north of Stratford on Avon.¹ The Register is a beautifully illuminated manuscript bound in wooden boards covered with leather, it has two hundred and thirty-nine leaves of vellum, and contains the names of about fifteen thousand members between 1451 and 1535. The last Warden of the Guild was a Townsend, and about 1630 Dugdale mentions the Register as being in the possession of Sir Simon Archer, whose grandmother was a daughter of Sir Robert Townsend, of Umberslade, but it was bought about the year 1790 for three guineas from a bookseller in a small street near St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, by Mr. Thos. Caldecott, who gave it to Wm. Hamper, the Birmingham antiquary, at whose death it passed into the hands of Wm. Staunton, of Longbridge.² In the year 1894 the Committee of the Birmingham Archaeological Society, recognizing the unique interest of the Register of the Knowle Guild, especially in its bearing on Shakespearean history, decided to print it, as the manuscript, which they had been the means of securing for the local

¹ Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, vol. ii, p. 959, ed. 2.

² Letters pasted in the Register of the Guild of Knowle.

Reference Library, had very narrowly escaped destruction when the building was burnt in 1879.¹

Returning to the Baddeley Clinton records, it will be remembered that the earliest discoverable member of the family was Adam de Oldediche, who had in 1389 a son and heir whose name was Adam Shakespere and who held, and probably then first obtained, lands within the manor of Baddeley Clinton; moreover, he held them by military service. Does it not seem exceedingly likely that the name and the land had both been given for military prowess, and that we have here the origin of the tradition in the poet's family that one of his ancestors had been rewarded for his valiant and faithful services? The name of the King (Henry VII), who was stated in the Herald's College draft to have advanced and rewarded him, is probably a mistake made by one of the later Shakespeares to whom the tradition had been handed down, and if we substitute for Henry VII the name of King Richard II, it would exactly fit into the jig-saw puzzle of the poet's pedigree, and give us a large choice of various kinds of military exploits and fighting, in some of which his fourteenth-century ancestor must have distinguished himself. But I am fain to admit that I have never been able to discover any Adam Oldediche who was rewarded by King Richard II; neither could my friend the late D. T. B. Wood, of the MSS. Department, of the British Museum.

Adam Shakespeare died in 1414, leaving a son John, who succeeded to his Baddeley lands, but not to the original home of the family at Oldediche. As he was under age when his father died, and his mother was still living, it seems possible that Alice Shakespeare was the second wife, and that by Adam's first wife he had another son, who was named Richard after the reigning sovereign. In any case a Shakespeare of that name must have had the Temple Balsall estate called Woldiche, because in 1457 prayers were asked for the souls of Richard Shakespere and Alice his wife "of Woldiche."² Unfortunately,

¹ I was at that time a member of the Committee. There was a very limited sale for the book and the cost of its publication had to be defrayed by the Society, which was then called the Archaeological Section of the Midland Institute.

² "Pia Ricardi Shakspere 't alicie vix ei' de Woldiche," p. 20 of the printed volume.

the Register does not begin till 1451, and this Richard is the first Shakespere to be mentioned in it. It seems quite natural that the eldest son should inherit the old family estate, Woldiche being the same place as Olddediche, a fact which was pointed out by the late Mr. W. B. Bickley, who also showed that an important and ancient farm-house in the manor of Temple Balsall (not far from the northern boundary of Baddesley Clinton parish) now called Oldwiche Farm constituted with another farm and some cottages the ancient hamlet of Olddediche.

As the identity of Woldiche with this Temple Balsall hamlet is very important in any attempt to unravel the complications of the poet's pedigree, more evidence may be demanded. One may turn aside therefore to point out that many inhabitants of Warwickshire who still use their native dialect would say if returning home, "I'm a goin' whum," also that numerous passages in the records of Market Harborough illustrate the same habit. "Spent of them that went with the prisoners, at their coming whome."¹ At Snitterfield, for example, when Richard Shakespeare was still living there, viz. in 1559, one of the houses contained "paynted clothes in the hawlle xij puder platters and dysshes and saucers iiiij brasse pottes and ij pannes and certayne *wold* candylletykes."²

In an inventory taken two years earlier at the home of Thomas Hargreve, Vicar of Snitterfield, there were "In the Hall on wolde Ambrye (that is one old cupboard) and Vij pecys of peynted clothys hanging about the hawll."³ An indefinite number of such examples of the local use in ancient times of "*wold*" for "*old*" could easily be produced. Moreover, when a certain Robert Green was admitted into the Knowle fraternity in 1498, his name was entered "Robertus grene de Oldyche," so he was probably occupying the second farmstead of that hamlet. Two years later is an entry for the soul of Margaret Green "Pro anima Margarete Grene de eadem," that is of the preceding place, viz. "Balsale."⁴ Another entry in 1520 concerns a Ralph Horeley and his wife, who are

¹ *Harborough Parish Records*, p. 70.

² Inventory in *Birthplace Records*.

³ Ib.

⁴ Page 132 of the printed version.

recorded as "Radulphus Horeley t alic vx ei de Balishaule";¹ and in the same year he and his wife occur again as "Rafe Worley t Alys is wyfe de Woldewych."² The second entry may perhaps have been written by a different scribe, but they certainly refer to the same people, the one giving the name of the hamlet and the other that of the manor, namely, Temple Balsall. It is clear then that when the Shakespeares of Oldediche, Woldiche or Balsall are mentioned, the same family is indicated.

In the Baddesley records Adam Shakesperc is described in 1389 as being the son and heir to Adam de Oldediche, so that he must have succeeded to the property in the manor of Temple Balsall, as well as that which he held by military service in Baddesley Clinton. It is pretty certain, therefore, that Richard Shakesperc whose soul was prayed for by the brethren and sisters of the Knowle Guild in 1457, and who is described as "de Woldiche," was his eldest son, the other son being the John whom we know from Baddesley records was under age when Adam died in 1414, and who was found by Father Norris in the same documents to have been holding his father's lands in Baddesley as late as 1441. These lands, as shown by him in the extracts already quoted, passed at the end of the fifteenth century out of the family for lack of male heirs.

The next members of the Shakespeare family who are mentioned in the Knowle Register are John and Alice his wife in 1460, who are entered as being of Rowington ("Johes Shakespeyc eiusdem ville t Alicia vx eius"). As no trace of the death of John the son of Adam was to be found in the records of Baddesley Clinton Hall, it seems possible that he left the manor between 1441 and 1460, and went to live at Rowington, where in later times Shakespeares were important.

In 1464 two brothers, Ralph and Richard, with their respective wives, are recorded close together on the same page.³ The Baddesley Clinton records show that they were holding lands on the eastern side of that manor, close to Wroxall,⁴ and as this Richard occurs no more in Baddesley, it is fairly

¹ Inventory in *Birthplace Records*, p. 243.

² Page 246 of the printed version.

⁴ Noted by Father Norris in the Baddesley documents.

³ Knowle Guild Register, p. 52.

certain that he crossed the border and became the founder of the Wroxall Shakespeares, because in the Register in 1464 there is a "Ricardus Schakespeire de Wroxale." Ralph had a wife named Joanna, who died in 1464, leaving two daughters. He is not mentioned again, but Father Norris found that he had died before 1496, when his lands were divided between his two sons-in-law.¹

In 1476 Thomas Shakspere and Christian his consort of Rowington are recorded in the Register,² which Thomas was no doubt the son of the John who disappeared from Baddesley Clinton and reappears at Rowington in 1460.

In the year 1486 is the entry, "For the soul of Thomas Schakspere,"³ but as Thomas was not a usual name in that family no more was necessary to identify him. He may have been a son of the one who lived at Rowington. Later in the same year the soul of a Thomas Shakspere was prayed for,⁴ but again unfortunately his dwelling-place was not recorded, nor does it say who had his name entered. Later still the same year the Register records Thomas Shakspere and Alice his wife of Balsale.⁵ His residence being given, it is very likely that the name of the second Thomas was still on the bede-roll, and that the third had joined the Fraternity when he married. In 1511 the third Thomas had died, as, under "Ballishalle" (that is, Temple Balsall) Alice Shakespere is entered and for the soul of Thomas Shakespere.⁶ It will be noticed that the last three Thomas Shakespeares all occur in 1486, but under that date in the Register there are twelve pages of names, and as the succeeding year is 1489, it seems manifest that some headings have been missed. The editor says, "The first 100 leaves, 1451 up to 1502, have not been bound up in correct order of date and several years are wanting."⁷

This makes the sufficiently awful task of steering one's way through a bewildering maze of Warwickshire Shakespeares

¹ Rev. H. Norris, *Baddesley Clinton*, p. 123.

² Thoms Chacsper Et xpian consue de Rownton, p. 81.

³ P aia Thome Schakspere, p. 92.

⁴ Thomis Shakspēr P aia ei~, p. 98.

⁵ Thomas Shakspere et Aliche vx eius de Balsale, p. 101.

⁶ Ballishalle, Alicia Shakespere t pro aia Thō Shakesp ~, p. 196.

⁷ Page xxxiii.

still more heart-breaking. But I think nevertheless that there is here a distinct suggestion of a pedigree from Adam de Olde-diche in 1389 to Thomas Shakespere, of Balsall, who died in 1511, but hitherto it has been impossible to trace the poet's pedigree beyond Richard of Snitterfield, who is recorded there from 1529 to 1560. It has, however, not been noticed that in 1544 there was a John at Balsall who had the nickname of Shakeshaft¹, and that when John Palmer the Tithing-man at Snitterfield wanted to present Richard Shakespeare as owing suit of Court, he sometimes entered him by the nickname (Shakeschafte at one time and Shakestaff at another) by which he was familiarly known to his friends and neighbours, in order to distinguish him from the other Richard Shakespeares of the same district.² And as it was not unusual for a nickname or an alias to descend from father to son, and sometimes to become a permanent surname, I believe that Richard of Snitterfield was the son or the younger brother of John of Balsall, and shared the same nickname.

In this connection it is useful to remember that a man's legal name was then (as it is now if we only knew it) his Christian name, his surname being simply the means by which he was distinguished from other Johns or Richards. So that his surname might vary so long as there was some indication as to which John or Richard was meant. The poet's grandfather would probably have remained plain Richard Shakespere, but for the confusion likely to arise from the presence of other Richard Shakesperes not many miles away. It was convenient, therefore, to use the nickname of Shakeshaft by which the Oldediche members of the family had become known, a nickname which they may have got by failing to show any of the valour which their name suggested. They may have been thought capable of wielding a staff or a shaft, but not one that had the blade of a spear on it.

John was probably the eldest son, as he seems to have inherited the old family property in Temple Balsall, when Thomas died and was prayed for in 1511. Richard first appears

¹ Subsidy Roll 193(854)35 Henry VIII, "John Shakeshaft, 4d. for Balsall."

² Stopes, *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 16.

at Snitterfield in 1529, but as he was then presented for owing suit of court he may have been there for some time.¹

John Shakeshaftte was perhaps the "Johes" Shakspere who with Joan his wife was entered in the Knowle Register in 1526.² He was still at Temple Balsall in 1548 (2 Edward VI), appearing on the jury for Balsall in that year as John Shake-shaft.³

The poet's ancestry on his father's side, then, would appear to be roughly speaking traceable back to Adam de Oldediche, who lived in the manor of Temple Balsall in 1389, as the family were there for two centuries. Adam may have been the owner and his family may have been there for generations before that date.

Adam's son John who succeeded to his land at Baddesley is not likely to have been a direct ancestor of the poet, unless possibly through his son Richard ("Ricardus Schakespeire de Wroxall" in the Knowle Register), who seems to have sold his rights in Baddesley to his brother Ralph and passed over the border into the next parish.

But if the Shakespeares of Oldediche were the direct ancestors of the great Shakespeare, why did not he (the poet) or his grandfather, Richard of Snitterfield, inherit any benefit from, or ever have been known to have visited that Temple Balsall property? I think a discovery made by Mrs. Stopes at the Record Office sheds a light on this problem. She says that in the Controlment Rolls, Mich. 22 Eliz. she got on the track of John Shakespeare (late of Balsall, co. Warr.) and further discovered that by the instigation of the Devil, and his own malice, he had made a noose of rope fast to a beam in his house and hanged himself on 23rd July, 21 Eliz. 1579.⁴ He had goods only to the value of £3 14s. 4d. which John Piers, Bishop of Winchester, as chief almoner to the Queen, granted by way of alms to the widow, Matilda Shakespeare. In the inventory of the goods are included some painted cloths.⁵ It seems probable that his Satanic Majesty had tempted John

¹ G. R. French evidently had not seen these Court Rolls.

² Johēs Shakspere -t Johanna xv, p. 256. This is the last Shakespeare mentioned in the Knowle Register.

³ Subsidy Roll, 193(109).

⁴ *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 43.

⁵ Ib., p. 43.

Shakespeare with alcoholic drinks, an old trick of his, and that the earthly possessions of John were dissipated till he was driven to hang himself. Suicide, then, was not lightly regarded. The goods of a suicide were forfeited to the Crown, the Church repudiated him and the State "buried him at four cross-roads with a stake in his inside."¹

He was probably a son of John Shakespeare alias Shakeshaftc, but apparently not the eldest as there was a Thomas Shakespere at Warwick, who made a will in 1573,² which shows that he owned land at Temple Balsall. Like the ancestors of Joseph Chamberlain, he was a cordwainer and may have been an elder brother of John of Balsall, who as a younger son was probably living as a tenant on the family land. John evidently did not own any of it. The will of Thomas was proved in 1577. In it he directs "that Agnes my wyff yf she do lyve to enjoie her free benche in the lordship of balsall shall paye unto ffrancis lecy my sonne in lawe foure pounds within two yeares next ensueing my decesse fourthe of the same lands lying in balsall afsd." He also bequeathed "unto my sonne Thomas foure nobles to be payde out of the Rents of the same land in balsall." Also to "John my sonne foure nobles out of the same lande."

ISABELLA SHAKESPEARE

A few facts are discoverable concerning the Lady Isabella Shakespeare, who was Prioress of the Benedictine Nunnery at Wroxall, about ten miles north of Stratford. Her term of office appears to have been uneventful; and free from the scandals and quarrels which had, in both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, led to stern censure being directed to some of her predecessors, from the Bishops of Worcester.³

It is, however, possible to say that she must have been of good family, because in the Middle Ages it was customary

¹ Burying self-murderers at cross-roads, with a stake driven through them, was of immemorial antiquity. It was abolished by statute in 1823, 4 Geo. IV, c. 52.

² Till recently at Worcester, as Warwick was then in that diocese, but now removed to Birmingham.

³ *Records of Wroxall*, p. 17. *Register Cobham*, fol. 98.

amongst the upper classes to place their daughters in convents if no suitable marriage had been found for them. Marriages were frequently arranged by purchase when the contracting (or rather contracted) parties were children, but in the case of daughters, it was often cheaper to pay for their admission to a nunnery.

In her book, *English Mediaeval Nunneries*, Professor Eileen Power says: "It has indeed been insufficiently recognized that the mediaeval nunneries were recruited almost entirely from amongst the upper classes. They were essentially aristocratic institutions, the refuge of the gently born."

The same writer adds in a chapter on Education: "No single instance has ever been brought of a low-born nun, or a low-born schoolgirl in any English nunnery, for the three centuries before the nunneries were dissolved."¹

A document dated April 17, 1501, of which a translation is printed in *Records of Wroxall* compiled by the late J. W. Ryland, F.S.A., seems to be the first instance in which the Lady Isabella Shakespeare the Prioress can be traced. The translation is as follows:

"At the court of the lady Isabella, prioress of Wroxall, held there on Saturday next, before the Feast of St. George the Martyr, in the 16th year of the reign of Henry VII, came John Benet and took of the said lady prioress one messuage, with a garden adjacent, and 3 crofts, with their appurtenances, in Wroxall, late in the tenure of John Smyth. To have to himself, Isabella his wife, and Agnes daughter of the said John and Isabella; to hold to them according to the custom of the manor there. Rendering therefore yearly to the aforesaid lady and her successors 5s., and the other services therefore formerly due and accustomed, giving also the said lady and her successors, at the death or departure of each of them, a heriot, to wit the best beast according to the custom of the manor there.

"And he gives to the said lady the prioress for a fine at entry for having such estate 5s. And he is admitted tenant and he did fealty."²

Amongst the Court Rolls of Wroxall Manor in the Public

¹ Professor Eileen Power's *Mediaeval English Nunneries*.

² Augmentation Office, *Cartam. Miscell.*, vol. v, 254.

Record Office is an entry showing that "At the court of the lady Isabella Shakespeare the prioress held there on Wednesday the Morrow of All Souls in the 23rd year of the reign of King Henry the seventh, came John Shakespeare and took of the said lady one messuage 4 crofts and one grove with the 'Crosseffilde' with their appurtenances, in Wroxall. To have to him, Ellen his wife and Anthony son of the same John and Ellen. To hold to them according to the custom of the Manor there. Paying therefore yearly to the said lady and to her successors 17s 2d. Giving also at every decease or going away of them one heriot according to the custom of the manor aforesaid. And he gives to the said lady for a fine for entry two capons. And he is admitted tenant. And he did fealty."

In the year 1525 the Lady Jane Shakespeare was addressed by Jeremy Bishop of Worcester "to our beloved in Christ, Joan Shakespeare, subprioress of the house or priory of Wroxall etc. Whereas your house aforesaid is vacant by the resignation of Dame Jocosa Brome. We grant you licence to elect a fitting person from your priory as your prioress." Agnes Litle elected and confirmed.¹

At Hatton Church the Register records her death: "Ano Dni mcccc^molxxvj. Vicesimo primo die Octobris mortua et sepulta erat Domina Jane, Jane Shakspeare aliquando una monicar~ Wraxoll."²

¹ Augmentation Office, *Cartam. Miscell.*, *Records of Wroxall*, p. 92. *Register of Bishop Jeremy*, fol. 8.

² J. W. Ryland, *Wroxall Records*, p. xxii.

Chapter IV

Richard Shakespeare's Farmstead at Snitterfield

THE latest notices that Halliwell-Phillipps found concerning the farm of Richard Shakespeare show that it lay somewhere on the northside of the Warwick Road. One extract was from the proceedings of a View of Frank Pledge held at Snitterfield on October 3, 1560, "imprimis that every tenaunte for his parte doe make his hedges and ditches betwixt the end of the lane of Richard Shakespere, and the hedge called Dawking's hedge¹ before the feast of St Luke, sub pene iijs. iiijd. Halliwell-Phillipps goes on to say that as there was a field called Dawking's Close at the back of the house called The Wolds, "it may be assumed that Richard's land, or at least a portion of it, lay somewhere on the North of Warwick Way, anciently called Warwick Lane, but the allusions are too indefinite to sanction a more absolute inference."² They do, however, provide independent confirmation of my theory as to the location of his house, at the corner of a lane and on the north side of the Warwick Road.

As it was stated in 1581 that it "doth abut on the High Street,"³ it probably had no moat, but only the rivulet and various ponds. It must have had a stack-garth, with generally a few ricks in it, but most of the corn would be in the barn and other buildings; they and the house were all roofed with thatch, and built of oak beams. The barn would have panels of wattle daubed with clay between the beams, except in the

¹ Hedges were so few that they were often used in documents as landmarks.

² *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 208.

³ *Shakespeare's Environment*, pp. 32 and 33.

upper part where the panels were woven with split oak strips to provide ventilation. We know from the documents that there was a garden and orchard, both of which would be hedged, or perhaps had walls of mud thatched at the top with straw. Such walls were quite usual in South Warwickshire in my memory, and there are many in the villages to the south and east of Stratford even now, especially in those near Tredington. Halliwell-Phillipps found some in Stratford itself, and there are numerous entries concerning mud walls in the Guild Accounts. In 1466 we find "making a mud wall 5s. 3d; a cart-load of straw for the same wall with carriage of it 14d." In 1496 "making a mud wall in the chapel" (that is in the chapel precincts) 7s.

The farm-yard would be sheltered by the walls of the house and the barn with a few other farm-buildings. The fences, except those near to the house, were mostly of hurdles, composed of upright rods, wattled with split withys, so that they could be easily moved and rearranged. Near the farmstead there were rather small closes of "several," round which were permanent hedges and ditches, and in which the more important animals would be gathered at night. In the daytime they would be either tethered on the "balks" of the open fields or in charge of a herdsman on the common lands, when they were not at work.

Fitzherbert says, "for the horses may be teddered or tyed upon legs, balks or hades, where as oxen may not be kept; and it is not vsed to tedder them but in few places."

The fields in Brittany are divided by banks of earth generally crowned with gorse and brambles and the gates made of two horizontal rails joined by numerous upright sticks. The evidences seem to show that this was often so in Shakespeare's England. According to Best's *Farming Book*, in 1641,¹ "on the 3rd of May, They beginne to teather theire draught cattle, viz; theire horses and theire oxen, abroad; in the field on the heads, common balkes, bounders of fields, and theire owne lande endes, . . . as for such heads and balkes as part two fields, and are bounders betwixt two severall lordshipps, they are common to both."

¹ P. 118.

In these days practically all agricultural land in England is "in severalty" and the common fields have almost ceased to exist. But even now it is possible to discern, as the late Canon Taylor said, "how indelibly impressed on the soil by the ancient plough, are the marks of those very divisions of the land which were recorded in the Domesday Survey. . . . The ancient arable, consisting as a rule of the best land, because land was plentiful, has commonly long since gone back to valuable pasture, inferior soils which were formerly un-reclaimed being now taken into tillage, the great rigs, lands or selions, usually a furlong in length and either a perch or two perches in breadth, remaining as they were left by the Domesday Co-operative plough, often higher by two feet or more in the ridge than in the furrow, while here and there at regular intervals may be discerned the traces of the flat unploughed balks, two furrows broad, left in turf to separate and give access to the strips held by the several tenants of the manor. Even where the old arable still remains in tillage, it is not impossible as harvest time approaches to detect by the varying colours of the ripening corn the lines of the selions of the Domesday plough, now levelled by cross-ploughing, but still traceable owing to the fact of the corn growing more luxuriantly, and ripening more slowly in the deeper and richer soil which had filled the depressions between the ancient selions. . . . And as we gaze on these actual acres, roods, and furlongs, we notice that they are seldom straight such as are delved by the modern two-horse plough, but as is shown by the hedges which scrupulously follow the lines of the turf balks which separated the oxgangs¹ of different owners they lie in great sweeping curves, . . . the long narrow fields of the present farms thus perpetuating the graceful curves of the acres—curves which can only be due to the twist of the great eight ox plough, as the leading oxen were pulled round in preparation for the turn as they approached the end of the furlong."²

At Snitterfield the turf still shows by its regular undulations that a very great proportion of it now under permanent

¹ Oxbang, a measure of land.

² Article in the *Contemporary Review* for December 1886.



FIG. 10.—Remains of open-field cultivation

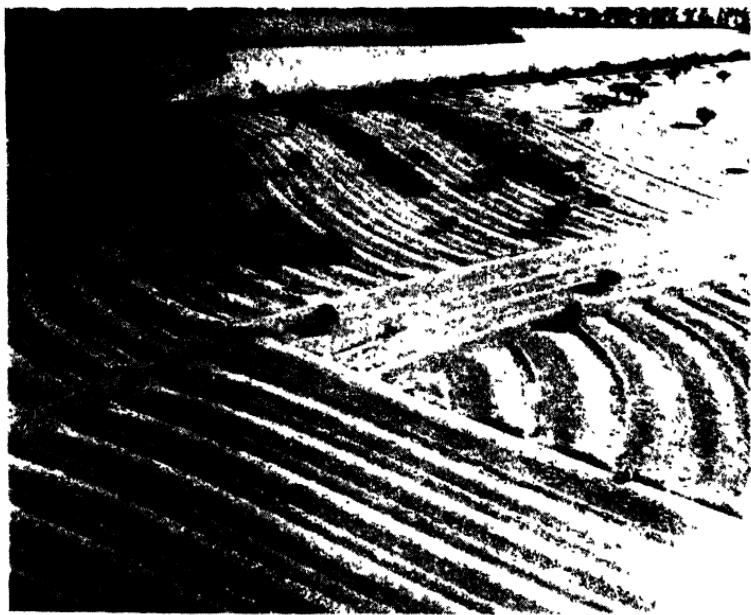


FIG. 11.—Champion farming, Crimscote

[To face page 78]

pasture has been for centuries turned by the plough, but the evidences of this old manorial cultivation are not of a specially striking or recent kind.

There is, however, at Crimscote, about six miles to the south of Stratford, a singularly well-preserved expanse of ground which has been till modern times cultivated on the old hedge-less open-field system, and the ancient contours are still manifested with extraordinary clearness. Some years ago a curious condition of things had come about there, through several acres having been allowed to revert to a state of nature. It was the habit to leave the channel between the "lands" to grow any sort of weeds and vegetation that it could, with the result that hips and haws, seeds and berries were competing with the grass, and the balks were "crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds."¹ Under these conditions when the ground ceased to be tilled, the hawthorn bushes having the start of all the idle weeds that grew in the "sustaining corn," very soon outstripped them and produced so much shadow that they were soon smothered. The result was a strange-looking succession of dark green growth like enormous hawthorn hedges but only a perch or two apart, and following accurately the curving track of the old ox-plough. When I showed them to my friend the late A. F. de Navarro he was so impressed with the weird strangeness of this uncommon sight that he tried to get it photographed from the air to illustrate this book, but it was several years before the attempt was made, and in the meanwhile a farmer had returned to Crimscote from New Zealand, and wood being much in demand during the war, he had set up a steam saw among the hawthorns, and converted nearly all of them into firewood.

The photographs at Figs. 10 and 11 on same page show some remnants of these hawthorn rows, but the removal of the others has enabled one to get a better idea of the open-field system. In Fig. 11 there is a white-faced Hereford bullock near the right-hand corner, which gives an idea of the scale.

¹ *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc. 4.

ANCIENT PLOUGHS

The ploughs that were used in sixteenth-century Warwickshire seem to have varied considerably in pattern according to the nature of the soil. They were made almost entirely of wood and put together with wooden pins; only the coulter and the "shoe" on the toe of the mould-board being of iron. Such ploughs were massive and heavy, the earth-board, mould-board or breast-board, as these names suggest, remaining wooden even into the eighteenth century, for J. Mortimer in his 1716 edition says, "About Colchester they have a light wheel plough . . . which sort of Plough is very peculiar for its earthboard being made of Iron, by which means they make it rounding which helps to turn the Earth or Turf, much better than any other plough that I have seen."¹ There is a fine carving of an ox-plough on a fifteenth-century rood-screen at Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset. (Fig. 12.)

In the Wilmcote collection of implements, there are several old ploughs that illustrate the ancient kind. One of these, which seems to have been an ox-plough, has a double arrangement of mould-boards, the first of which began to turn over the earth and the second following, turned it completely over. None of these ploughs have wheels, but wheels were often used on ploughs in very early times.

RICHARD SHAKESPEARE'S OXEN

As there is no inventory known that gives any idea of his effects, we cannot be certain of the amount of his live-stock, but judging by the extent of his farm Richard must have had more draught-oxen than the four which a friend left him in 1543. In that year "Thomas Atwode, alias Tailor, of Stratford-upon-Avon" left "Unto Richarde Shakspere of Snytfelde my foure oxen which are nowe in his keping"² He probably had at least four others because the usual number to a plough was eight. For example, in 1500 Sir John Everyngham of Birkin, in Yorkshire, left to his wife "eight oxen commonly

¹ *The Whole Art of Husbandry*, vol. i, p. 46.

² The will was proved in London in 1544, P.C.C. 7. Pynning.



FIG. 12.—A fifteenth-century ox-plough, Norton Fuawarren

called a whole draught.”¹ Also in the inventory of Wm. Knyvett of Thorntonbrigs, Yorks. “vij old drawinge oxen lyeinge in the oxe house xvjl,”² also the will of Sir William Inglebie in 1578 says “that my sonne John have viij oxen or eight stotts with all furniture that belongeth them for making of him a draught.”³

Richard's oxen when not at work would be found in some “several” close, not far from the house. The Elizabethan edition of Fitzherbert's *Husbandry* says that “the husbandman that keepeth the Oxe plow, must have ‘several’” (that is enclosed) “pastures for the keeping of his Oxen when they come from worke, for the Oxe may not endure his work and labour all day, and then be put to the commons, or to be kept before the Hewardman, and then be set in a fold all night without meate, and so goe to his travell in the morning, but if he be in a good pasture all night hee will labour all day daily.”⁴

In mediaeval times, as may be seen in the Luttrell Psalter and other early MSS., the draught-oxen were sometimes small and short-horned, but by the end of the sixteenth century they were much bigger and their horns longer. Harrison in 1580 says, “Our oxen are such, as the like are not to be found in any country in Europe. . . . Their horns also are known to be more fair and large in England than in any other places. . . . Certes it is not strange in England to see oxen whose horns have the length of a yard between the tips, and they themselves thereto so tall, as the height of a man of mean and indifferent stature⁵ is scarce equal to them.”⁶

Rathgeb, a Dutchman, on his visit to England in 1592 writes of “beautiful oxen and cows, although not so big as the Burgundy cattle, but they have very large horns, are low and heavy and for the most part black.”

In Sussex, where ox-ploughing still survived on one or two farms up till 1925 or later, the black Welsh breed have been used for many years, and are with their long white

¹ Uxori meae octo boves, vulgariter nuncupatos a hole draught, p. 171.
Testa Ebor. vol. liii.

² Surtees, vol. 26, p. 101.

⁴ Fitzherbert, p. ii.

⁶ Harrison's *Description of England*.

³ Surtees, vol. 104, p. 130.

⁵ That is a man of average height.

horns and glossy black coats exceedingly picturesque. Also they wore the ancient pattern of yokes, as in Elizabethan times. On the Cotswolds, where alone in the Stratford district ox-ploughing continues, the modern Hereford breed is used and the animals are arrayed in horse's cart-harness, which, as they wear big blinkers, looks rather ugly and unnatural, and one does not get much idea from them of the ploughing of the sixteenth century. But as the black Welsh cattle and the Smoky-faced Montgomery breed did find their way into this district in those times, it is very probable that they were used for draught-oxen as they are big framed and powerful animals and very tractable. One of the Worcester By-laws in the reign of Henry VII says, "where it is used that the market of catell ys kept within the Brode Street . . . wherfore hit is ordeined that from this yeld following, all Walshe catell, comyng to the market to be sold, be brought in Dolday, and all English catell in Anger Lanc."¹

Fitzherbert says, "Oxen will plow in tough Clay, & vpon hillie ground where Horses of an indifferent goodness will stand still."

A team of eight oxen ploughing must have been a most picturesque incident of which the accompanying illustration of a smaller team drawing a wagon will give a faint idea. (Fig. 13.)

YOKES AND OX-BOWS

The yoke was a thick piece of shaped wood, laid across the necks of a pair of oxen, with the ox-bows passed through it in holes made at intervals sufficient to keep each ox of the pair in place. Ox-bows were also used instead of the modern chain now employed for tethering cattle in stalls. In the Shuttleworth Accounts in 1604 "A laborer iij days helpinge to bend oxe bowes," was paid 9d.² and in 1605 a "wright" (i.e. a carpenter) was paid for "iiij days byndinge the booses (bending the bows) for the kyne in the new barne ijs."³

When I was a boy every calf in North Wales had a small

¹ Noake's *Worcester in Olden Times*, p. 47.

² Steward's *Accounts Camden Society*, p. 156.

³ Ib., p. 168



FIG. 13.—A modern ox-team

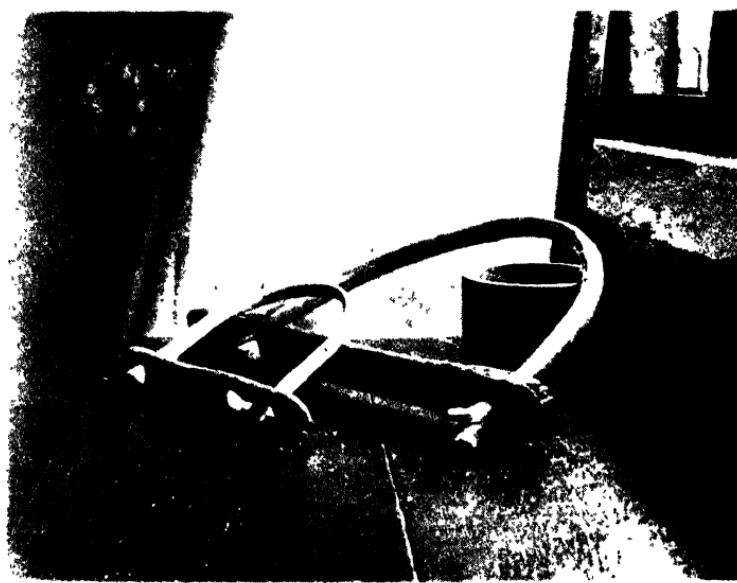


FIG. 14.—Ox-bow and calf-bow

[To face page 82]

wooden ox-bow round its neck whether loose in fields or penned in a building, though for full-grown cattle they were then obsolete, and now it is almost impossible to find either kind. It has taken me twenty-five years' intermittent searching to find those which are at the Arden house at Wilmcote, and and those in the Hereford and Cheltenham Museums.

An ox-bow was made in two pieces, the bow which was generally a peeled stick of ash, hazel or willow, bent to the shape of an inverted letter U, and shaved down at each end to within an inch or so of the tip where a knob of wood was left. The second piece was of thicker wood, rather flat and generally shaped into a waist in the middle. It had a round hole at one end and a hole with a narrow elongation at the other. Through the first hole the bow worked loosely, but the other end could be sprung into the longer hole after the bow had been placed over the neck of the ox, and having the action of a spring the bow was kept in its place by its own pressure. Ox-bows (*arcubus bovinis*) were used by the monks of Jarrow in 1314.¹ In 1585 John Ogle of Newesham had "vij yokes and xvij bowes worth 6s. 8d., iij ox harrows, wherof j with iron tethe; and at Belsyd xij yokes and xx bowes 6s, j ox harowe with irone teethe."²

Shakespeare knew all about yokes and ox-bows. The noun "yoke" and the verb "to yoke" are used forty-three times in the Plays and four times in the Poems. Touchstone says, "As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires."³ In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Titania says, because every pelting river has overborne their continents, "The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain, The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard."⁴ "How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford Fair?" says Justice Shallow.⁵ In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby says of Viola and Sir Andrew Ague-check, "I think oxen and wain-ropes cannot hale them together."⁶

¹ Surtees, *Domus de Jarowe*, vol. 29, p. 9.

² *Testa Ebor*, p. 131.

³ *As You Like It*, Act III, Sc. 3. Ox-bows are not mentioned in the *Shakespeare Glossary*.

⁴ Act II, Sc. 11, *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁵ *Henry IV*, Part II, Act, III, Sc. 2.

⁶ *Twelfth Night*, Act II, Sc. 1.

and in *Troilus and Cressida*, "Yoke you like draught-oxen and make you plough up the wars."¹

WOODEN IMPLEMENTS

It is an interesting fact that practically all the agricultural implements of the Middle Ages, down to the time of Shakespeare, were made of wood protected by a very small quantity of iron, because iron was scarce and dear. Even the spades used for digging were made of wood with an iron edge. The hangings of needlework and linen at Bayeux, known as the Bayeux Tapestry, which is of eleventh- and twelfth-century work, shows many examples of such spades, and in these the blade is not fixed centrally but is on one side of the handle, so that there was plenty of room for the digger's foot to press it into the ground.

In a Calendar written in England in the eleventh century, spades of the same kind are being used in a scene depicting the Month of March.² One of the thirteenth-century windows of the south choir-aisle at Canterbury which has a series of medallions illustrating various miracles attributed to Thomas à Becket, show several examples of the shod wooden spade, which is of the shape shown at Fig. 15.

In the Peterborough Psalter, a thirteenth-century manuscript executed in East Anglia and now in the Belgian National Library, the month of March is represented by a man digging with a spade of the same shape as the Bayeux spades, with the same broad edge of iron. In the manuscript known as Queen Mary's Psalter, but which was executed in the fourteenth century by an English artist, are two scenes in which Adam is digging, and he uses a spade shaped like a baker's peel, made of wood but edged with iron.

As a rule all these wooden implements were, in the long evenings of autumn and winter, made at home beside the fire, by which also the work was lighted. Fitzherbert's *Booke of Husbandry* says under "How Forks and Rakes should be made," "A good husband will alwaies have his Forkes and

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, Act II, Sc. 1.

² British Museum, Cotton MS., Julius A., vi, fol. 4.

Rakes made ready the Winter before, and they would be got between Michaelmas and Martilmas, and Keyked and sette even, to lyc upright in thy hand, and then will they be hard, stiffe and dry. When the husband sitteth by the fire and hath nothing to doe, then may hee make them readie and

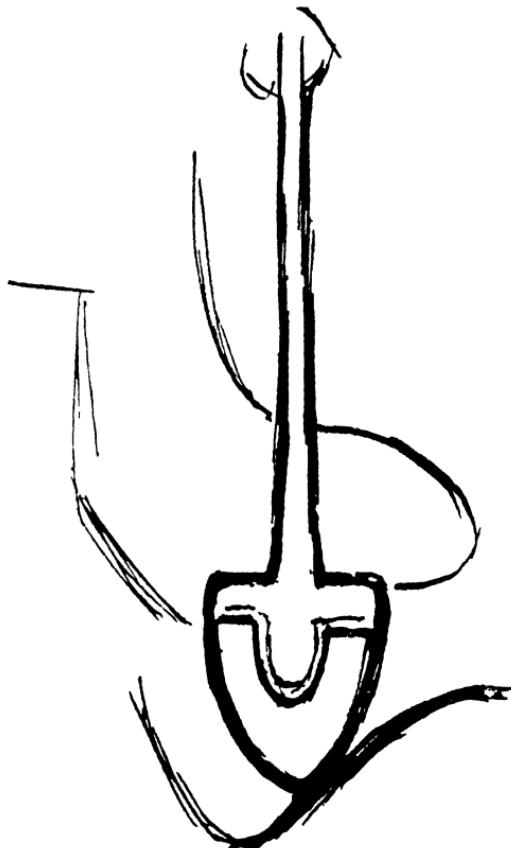


FIG. 15.—Wooden spade, shod with iron (from window in Canterbury Cathedral)

tooth the Rakes with dry withie wood." The rakes in those times had wooden teeth which went right through the cross piece, but generally the teeth of harrows were of iron.

Under the head of December's Husbandry, Thomas Tusser suggests that a bailiff in walking about, should "spy out" suitable wood for "yokes, forks, and such other." And that

he should "gather the same, as he walketh about; And after at leisure, let this be his hire, To beath¹ them and trim them at home by the fier."² He also advises the farmer "In walking about, Good fork spie out."³ In Lower Brittany when I was young, the ordinary hay-fork was made by selecting a straight branch which had a suitably shaped pair of smaller ones growing from it. Wooden forks are used in some parts of France down to the present time. In England during the Middle Ages they were tipped with iron to prevent them wearing away, and were then described as "shod."

I have lent an interesting wooden hay-fork to the collection of implements at the Arden House at Wilmcote. This was brought by a friend from an old house in Belgium, in recent times. In the inventory of John Casse of Scriven in 1576 there were "Turves, Oxen bowes and oyther hustelman xvjd.; iij iron mould rakes, ij shod forks xijd."⁴ In the goods of Richard Best of Middleton Whernoy, in 1581, there were in "the loft over the ketchinge" 4 forks shode, and 2 sholes 2s"; but in the same loft "15 forkes unshodde," were priced at the *same* amount.⁵ In 1569 "The right worshipful Wlter Strykland of Syserghe" in Westmorland had "ij ploweswith their ireons perteyninge to them and plowes withe oute ireon in the oxen house" and "ij shod forks V shode shules, ij pitche forks, a brear crooke [briar Crook] a dozen of sickles."⁶

The great scarcity of wooden implements of any age is caused in most cases by the temptation to light fires with them, but a fine example of a wooden spade, iron-shod, at the ancient church of Llanrwchwyn, on the mountains above the Conway, in North Wales, was perfect when I was sketching there at the end of the last century. I tried years after to get it photographed, but the Vicar said all the upper part of the spade had rotted, through the dampness of the church.

¹ That is, bend them without heat.

² December's Abstract, p. 50.

³ Ib., p. 55.

⁵ Best's *Farming Book*.

² December's Abstract, p. 50.

⁴ *Richmondshire Wills*, p. 260.

⁶ Surtees Society, vol. 26, p. 218.



FIG. 16.—Worcester misericord. Winter



FIG. 19.—Worcester misericord. Sowing



FIG. 21.—Sowing and harrowing

Digging

MEDIEVAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MONTHS OR SEASONS

It is very fortunate that the people of the Middle Ages were so fond of depicting in their churches, and their houses, in illuminated manuscripts (such as Psalters each of which generally included a Calendar), on carved oak and sculptured stone, painted walls and coloured glass, a series illustrating the occupations, either of the Seasons or of the Months.

They did not do them for our benefit, but without them we should often be left guessing, and groping in the dark, unable to say what the men and women of those times, their habits and activities, their implements, dress, and the surroundings of their lives were really like.

Beginning with Winter or the month of January they generally show a man seated at the fire, either stirring a pot or drinking something hot that he has brewed in it. On a misericord at Worcester Cathedral he is stirring one of the Gothic bell-metal pots standing on the fire, but its legs are hidden by the fuel and flames. He is very suggestive of cold weather, his cap having ear-flaps tied under his chin, a tippet covering his shoulders, he has taken off his boots to warm his feet, and he is wearing gloves which appear to have only two fingers and a thumb each. As was usual in these mediaeval carvings, there is no attempt to depict the scene in its correct proportions. The fireplace has a well-moulded hood but it is on almost diminutive scale. It would nevertheless be accepted as a satisfying representation of a fireplace by the artist's employers, who would not expect a realistic one on a scale proportionate to the man. Chimneys being very scarce he could not resist showing the battlemented top of this handsome example, though he had no room for the chimney-shaft itself. (Fig. 16.) The left pendant shows a large and comfortable-looking cat, and the right two flitches of bacon hanging up. Practically all these Worcester carvings are of the fourteenth century.

In a window of the hall at Norbury Manor-house in Derbyshire are only six roundels of glass remaining from a set of the twelve months. January is symbolized by an elderly man, who wears a hat with the brim turned down over a

hood which envelops his neck and covers his shoulders. He has a long fur-lined gown, with embroidered cuffs, which are nearly hidden by the repairing of a crack in the glass. His feet are covered with buckled shoes, and thrust into large wooden pattens. He is holding a cup with a foot, which he appears to have filled by means of a ladle from a small three-



FIG. 17.—The month of January at Norbury Manor-house

legged pot which hangs by a strong chain from the top of a reredos, against which a fire has been made; but he is so keen on warming his left foot that the fire is hidden. The chair, so far as it is visible, is very massive, and his pattens most interesting because they show what was the pattern of the pattens which used to be made by the craft of Patten-makers who had a Guild in London, and there was one at York,



FIG. 18.—Gardiner's apple. Printed at Almington January or Winter

who also made pouches, water-bougets, and other things. This figure of an old man warming himself has the word "Januarius" inscribed behind his head, so there is no doubt as to his identity. (Fig. 17.)

In an oak-panelled room at Abington Hall near Northampton is a quite similar subject. The old man is seated in a well-defined arm-chair, of which the back and sides have the linen-fold carving which is characteristic of the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth. He is wearing a hood over his head and shoulders, and, like his Derbyshire brother, has a ladle and a pot suspended by a heavy chain from an iron crane of Gothic design, which hangs over a reredos of brickwork. The artist has got his proportions unusually correct, but in an effort to put some perspective into his reredos, he has carved it toppling over. In most of his carvings he has a fondness for filling the blank spaces and corners with appropriate objects, but in this panel he has put a crescent moon in the sky, though the subject is an indoor one. A wooden tankard made of hooped staves is precariously balanced on the chair back, a small pitcher, apparently earthen, is standing in front of the fire, and a pair of bellows at the back of the arm-chair. (Fig. 18.) This exceedingly interesting carving has been described by Mr. Fred Roe in his book *Old Oak Furniture* as "An Alchemist," but it is the usual manner of representing "January" or "Winter."

FEBRUARY SOWING AND HARROWING

At Worcester is a misericord representing the sowing of corn. The sower has a "seed-lip" or lepe suspended over his shoulder, which seems to be composed of wicker-work woven through upright sticks. He has a sack of seed on each side, and the seed-corn is falling from his right hand, the grains being as large as beans. The pendants on either side are birds, who were always close attendants on sowers and ploughmen. (Fig. 19.)

The Luttrell Psalter gives a spirited sketch of a man with a similar seed-hopper of wicker, hung with a strap from his shoulder and grasped by a handle in his left hand, while a

stream of seed flows from his right. A large bird is stealing corn from a sack, while another is being driven away at the other end of the sketch by an indignant dog.

At Norbury Manor-house the glass roundel with the word Februarius has a sower who is digging with a wooden spade with a wide iron edge. He wears a doublet with buttons on



FIG. 20.—The month of February at Norbury Manor-house

each side, tightly fitting hose, and shoes that are sharply pointed. He has a two-handled vessel standing on the ground, in which he is keeping the seed, and has covered it with his hat to protect it from birds. (Fig. 20.) A somewhat similar man is using a wooden spade shod with iron in a glass roundel at Morley Church, Derbyshire, said to have come from Dale Abbey in the same county. In the priceless series of carvings

at Abington Hall the sower wears a large Gothic hood and large boots, the tops of which are turned down. His seed-lepe is well defined, and is made of wicker-work plaited in and out of the upright sticks which are continued downwards to form stumpy legs. It is held on the sower's left arm, and also by a shoulder strap. With his right hand he is dropping the seed which is being covered by a pair of harrows, drawn by two horses which are driven by a man with a whip having two lashes. The loops by which the harrows are being pulled may be of iron, but the traces are of rope. (Fig. 21.)

In 1491 the Priory of Jarrow had one seed-hopper (*j hoper pro seminacione*).¹ In the inventory of John Billingham of Crucke Hall, Durham, in 1577 was "one old lepe of wandes." It was with "one wynding (i.e. winnowing) Cloth iij Riddles and a syve the whole priced at ijs.vjd."² In later times seed-lepes were made of thin wood shaped to the sower's body. There is a good example at the Arden house at Wilmcote. After sowing, girls with slings and boys with bows and arrows were set to scare away the birds.³ King Lear said "That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper" (*Lear*, IV, 6). (Fig. 22.) This was altered by Pope who was not an authority on country life, to "cow-keepers" and Benvolio says,

We'll have no Cupid hoodwink'd with a scarf
Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath,
Scaring the ladies like a crow-keeper;⁴

PRUNING, MARCH

In the delineation of the seasons the mediaeval artist generally gave pruning an early place. At Abington it comes next to ploughing and harrowing. The scene shows two trees which have been drastically pruned with an implement which occurs in all pruning scenes, and which in this instance is lying on the ground while the owner is digging the garden with a wooden spade which has a broad iron edge. At Norbury the

¹ Surtees Society, vol. 29, p. 127.

² Ib., *Wills and Inventories*, vol. 2, p. 419.

³ *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc. 4.

⁴ *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Sc. 4.

roundel which is labelled *March*, is a man who is pruning trees with an instrument much like a slender bill-hook. Fortunately the name of each month is given in this Norbury window.

The month of April in the same series is symbolized by a young man who is richly dressed in fine fur-lined clothing with a cap of many folds. He is carrying various kinds of flowers. All these men have very pointed shoes, which indicates an early date.

The symbol for May generally shows the gathering of flowers, and at Worcester Cathedral there are two carvings which are probably intended for April and May; but in repeated church restorations the order of many misericords has been so much jumbled about that it is less easy than it ought to be to identify them. In one of the two floral subjects at Worcester a man stands in the centre blowing a horn which is unfortunately broken, but on each side is a group of beautifully carved flowers. In the other misericord a gentleman is standing between two flowering trees, grasping the stems. He is richly dressed, and a long hunting-knife hangs from his belt.

May is at Norbury manor-house represented by a lady with baggy sleeves lined with fur, carrying a hawk on her left fist and in her right hand a flowering branch. At Abington the same blossoms of spring are shown growing on hillocks, and a girl in the midst holding a flowering branch in each hand; doubtless for May.

In a window at the Mayor's Parlour at Leicester are the remains of a series of the months. One of these is a fragment, part of a representation of a man warming himself at a fire of sticks, intended no doubt to symbolize January. Another roundel shows a man weeding, and in the background a house with towers. He is using the weeding-hook with a longish handle, and the stick forked at the end which always accompanied it. Behind the man's head is a scroll with the word Junii. A part of the glass is broken away, but the portion remaining shows very careful drawing of the lower half of the implement, and also of the plants and weeds in the garden. In the Worcester Cathedral misericords three men in a row are holding what were certainly meant for weed-hooks, but



FIG. 25.—Weeding

Gathering flowers



FIG. 23.—Weeding, mutilated



FIG. 22.—A boy with bow and arrow crow-keeping, Norton Fitzwarren

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their stems, which were much "under cut," are broken away; behind them the stalks of corn are growing up, and at their feet the weeding-hooks have very broad blades. The pendants on each side have winged figures, one playing on the jocund rebeck. (Fig. 23.)

In the ancient Grammar School at Shrewsbury where

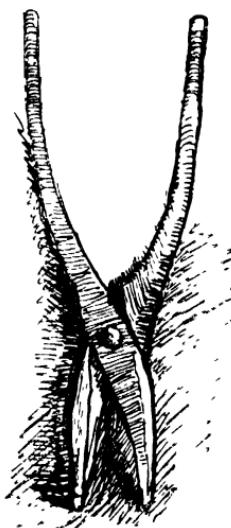


FIG. 24.—Weed-puller

Charles Darwin was educated and which is now a Museum, are four glass roundels in which the one marked June has a man weeding with the usual weed-hook and the forked stick with which the stem was held down, so that the hook could cut it. In wet weather the weed was pulled up with a large pair of wooden tongs. This latter kind of weed-puller must have remained in use through the eighteenth century, as they are found among the implements depicted on "God Speed The Plough" mugs which used to adorn the dressers of old-fashioned farmers, and were decorated with all the tools of husbandry. The weed-puller (Fig. 24) was found near Stratford, and was given to me by Mr. T. R. Hodges. At Abington Hall the carved panel of a man weeding is rather crude and the landscape very conventional, but there is no

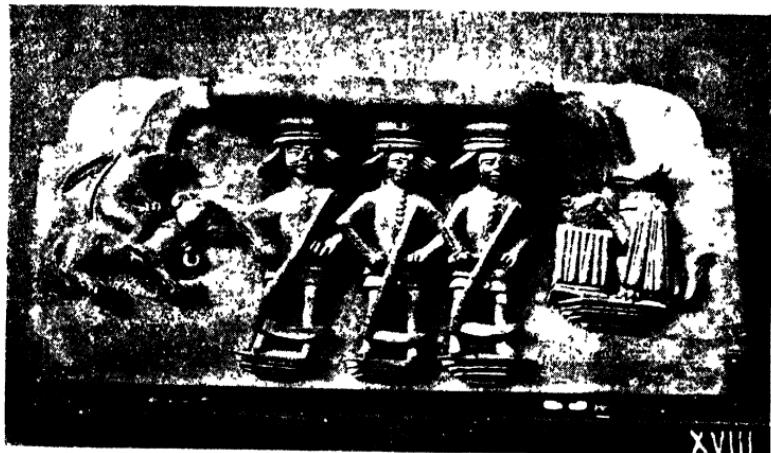
mistaking his occupation. He is in the "champion" country, with the "lands rigs or selions" around him, and is cutting off a thistle amid the sprouting corn. (Fig. 25.) In the monastery of Monk-Wearmouth they had "Vij weydhokkys in 1506."¹

SCYTHES AND STRICKLES

The scythes that were used by Richard Shakespeare had long and perfectly straight handles, and were short and broad in the blade, therefore nothing like our modern scythes, which are curved in the handle and long in the blade. A misericord carving under one of the stalls of Worcester Cathedral shows three mowers in a row who are using the early type of scythe. (Fig. 26.) The pendant to the left is a rabbit riding on a dog who has a well-defined collar and a very abject expression. The other pendant is a fox in a cope, preaching. In the Grimani Breviary, a manuscript of the last part of the fifteenth century, a group of mowers symbolizes the month of June, and illustrates the medieval manner of sharpening the scythe with a four-sided wooden instrument, which had a round handle, and a square upper part tapering to a sharp point. On the four flat sides grease was rubbed, and by means of the grease pounded grit or sand (sometimes a kind of mica) was applied to them, and formed a cutting surface with which the scythe was sharpened. The grease was carried in a large horn and the grit in a small one. The pair of such horns at Fig. 27 is one that I found about forty-five years ago in Merioneth. I got them chiefly because the larger horn had some dates and initials cut in it, the earliest being 1714. At that time scythes of that early kind were used in the remote parts of Wales, also in the damper parts of England, and were sharpened with the appliances above described. The wooden implement was known as a strickle, and was carried on the handle of the scythe near to the top, by having the pointed nose pushed under a small leathern band, while the lower

¹ Surtees, *Jarrow and Wearmouth*, vol. 29, p. 227.

² The same kind is shown in various early manuscripts, in Queen Mary's Psalter and the Luttrell Psalter, for instance.



XVIII

FIG. 26.—Worcester misericord. Mowing with early scythes

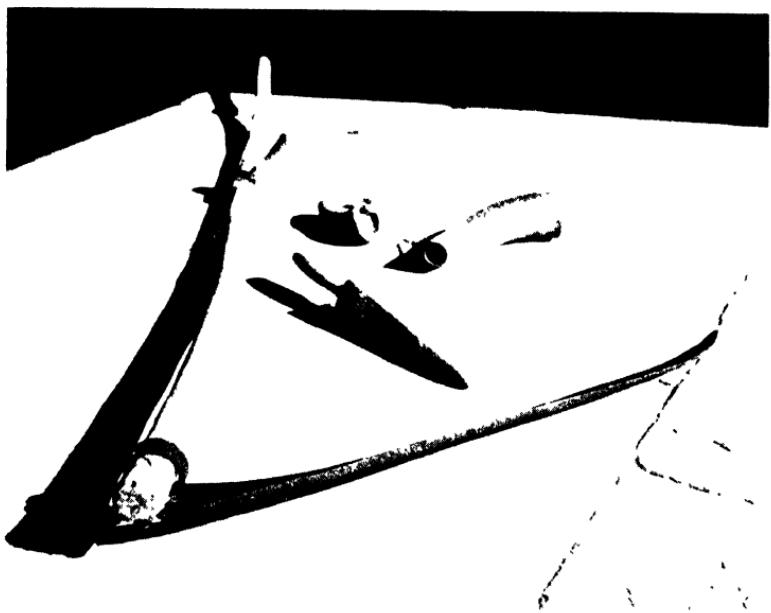


FIG. 27.—Early scythe, strickle and grease-horns

[To face page 94]

part was impaled on a wooden peg which projected from the handle lower down and entered the hole which can be seen in the strickle near to the base.

In Wales I have often seen these wooden sharpeners thus carried on the scythe-handles precisely as they are being carried in the Grimani Breviary. At Abington Hall also there is a very clearly defined example of this mode of carrying the scythe sharpener, but it is rather surprising that the scythe-handle has a somewhat curved outline, which as a rule is only found in more modern times. Such curved handles, it seems, may have been occasionally in use in the eastern Midlands for some time before they spread all over the English shires. Floating in the air to the left of the mower is a harvest bottle, which closely resembles the Gothic examples of the leather bottle.¹ (See Fig. 28.) In front of him is a scythe sharpener apparently of stone such as is still used to sharpen modern scythes and called a hone. His scythe-blade is of the early type. The Grimani Breviary was executed in Flanders, but was bought in 1489 by Cardinal Grimani and is now in the Library of St. Mark's at Venice. It has among its beautiful decorations a series of paintings to illustrate the months of the year by their occupations. (Fig. 29.)

The month of June has a haymaking scene, and in the foreground is a girl in a broad-brimmed hat, who is "tedding" or turning a swath that the man in front of her has just cut. He is using the ancient pattern of scythe with a straight handle longer than himself and a short blade. The wooden sharpener or strickle is very well shown fastened to the top of the handle. He has also a "cradle" attached to the handle near the blade. This is more clearly seen on the scythe of the second mower, and was a bow-shaped arrangement made of bent sticks; in early times a simple one, but later it became more elaborate. Its purpose was to catch the cut grass and lay it in a thicker mass. Another mower behind him also has the strickle fastened in the same way to the top of the handle of the Gothic scythe; and beyond is another man in the act of sharpening his scythe, and has the point of the blade on the ground. Each of the mowers has a cradle on his scythe. Best's *Farming*

¹ See *Black Jacks and Leather Bottells*, by the present writer.

Book says, "Corne sythes have allwayes cradles, for carryinge of cornc handsomely to the sweathe-balke."¹

Of two glass roundels in the possession of Colonel H. Sidney of Broadway, the better has Juliis on a long scroll and shows a young man with a large hat, short doublet laced together in front, tight black hose and very pointed boots. His scythe is of the ancient pattern and the sharpener is fastened (as I have often seen them many years ago) on the upper part of the handle. (Fig. 30.)

The old sickle was small and saw-edged, and cut the corn about half-way up the stem; but the later smooth-bladed "fagging-hook," of much larger dimensions, slashed it off close to the roots, because thatching for roofs became much less important than it used to be. The stubble left by the earlier sickle was grubbed or pulled up, and being used on a roof with its root end uppermost and covered by the overlapping straw made a much more lasting thatch than the long straw did because the lower part of the stubble was very much tougher and stronger than the upper part. In Roger's *History of Agriculture and Prices* are many instances of payments, generally to women, for pulling up stubble.

There are many representations of reaping in manuscripts and on misericords and other carvings which show how very short the sheaves of corn were in the straw. There is a very clearly defined group of three reapers in a misericord at Worcester. Each of them has seized a singularly small bunch of ears with his left hand, and is sawing off the stems with his sickle in the right. (Fig. 31.) The pendants have each a group of three shocks of corn with very short straw. As thatch was almost universal, the kind of straw that would last was of great importance.

At Dewsbury Church in Yorkshire are three glass roundels showing reaping, threshing and pig-killing. They have no inscriptions, but the one with a man reaping shows the saw-like edge of his sickle, and as usual he is cutting a very small bunch of corn very high up the stems.² The saw-like edge is also shown in the Luttrell Psalter and other manuscripts, "In

¹ Surtees, vol. 35, p. 49.

² Illustrated in vol. xliv of *Archaeologia*.



FIG. 28.—Reaping corn, Mowing grass, Abington panels



FIG. 29.—Mowing, from the Grimani Breviary

[To face page 96]

1601 the smith, for tothinge vj sickles iijd."¹ At Abington there is a man reaping and a woman binding the sheaves; again with short stalks, as already shown in Fig. 28. In later



FIG. 30.—The month of July

times the wheat was slashed off as low as possible, by a broad-bladed "fagging-hook," with the aid of a hooked stick held in the left hand. The reaping subject at Dewsbury no doubt stands for August, and the other two, threshing and pig-killing, for September and November. For December a rich feast.

The panels of Abington Hall are not only of great value for their antiquarian interest, but also because they decorated

¹ *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 139.

the home in which Elizabeth, Shakespeare's grand-daughter lived and died. She must have spent much of her time in the presence of these fascinating carvings, for there can be no doubt that they enriched the walls of the Great Chamber of the Bernards when she married into that family. They were probably executed for the Sir John Bernard who died in 1508; he is commemorated in the same panelling by a beautifully designed carving of his arms and initials. He married Margaret Daundelyn whose ancestor Richard d'Andeli came from Normandy with William the Conqueror.

Since the time of the Shakespeares Abington Hall has been considerably mauled, and now presents externally a somewhat classic exterior, also the beautiful park which surrounded it has been reduced in size. It is now the property of the Corporation of Northampton, and the hall is a public museum. It is still a fine and interesting building and retains a large Gothic Great Hall and a considerable part of the building which Lady Bernard lived in. Unfortunately the wonderful series of carved panels, some of which I have described, are not in their original setting. The walls of a very large room are covered with rich linen-fold panels, and the priceless carved panels are arranged as a continuous frieze above them, too high to be readily seen.

THRESHING AND WINNOWING

In the Middle Ages there were various methods for threshing the corn, such as driving or leading animals across it, as it lay on a hard piece of ground; or spreading it in a circle and trampling it out with men's feet, or holding it in bundles over the edge of a tub and beating out the ears with a stick. But we can feel assured that, when the Shakespeares were at Snitterfield and the Ardens were at Wilmcote, the corn they grew was threshed with a flail and muffled thuds such as many of us have heard in our youth, floated across the fold-yards from the open barn doors.

The ideal flail of old times had a long and delicately tapered handle of ash. The "swingel" or part which struck the dismantled sheaves was preferably of hawthorn, because that



FIG. 31.—Worcester misericord. Reaping



FIG. 32.—Rubbing of Septuagint brass

was least likely to split, but it was sometimes of holly or yew. In Warwickshire untanned hide might be used for the hinge, but a twisted eel-skin, of which the Avon afforded a plentiful supply, was considered to be greatly superior to leather for that purpose. The Shuttleworths of Gawthorp, in 1600, bought "whyt lether to be lasing¹ for flaylles ijid."

One of the glass roundels at the Mayor's Parlour at Leicester has the word September on a scroll above the head of a man who is threshing two sheaves of corn with a flail. Small objects intended for wheat grains are flying about, and there is a pile of corn behind the man.

The threshing subject at Dewsbury is much more spirited in treatment; the man in a short smock with bare feet, as farm-servants often worked, is thumping the corn with great energy. Behind him is a large jug on the top of which stands a goblet-shaped cup.

WINNOWING

In early times the winnowing of the threshed corn was done on a windy day, by pouring it on to a winnowing sheet which was laid on the ground in an exposed spot, so that the husks (or "chaff" as it was called) could be blown out of it as it fell. The works of mediæval writers on agriculture frequently refer to the "winnowing-fan," but I have never been able to find any English description of such an implement. Mortimer in his *Whole Art of Husbandry*,² written in 1707, says that he considers the casting-shovel better than "the wicker fan or the fan with sails." We may therefore conclude that the ancient winnowing fan was made of wicker, and that it had lingered in use in some places to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and also that the use of the casting shovel was not altogether superseded then. Casting is said by Mrs. Christie³ to have survived even into the eighteenth century in some parts of England. "It was dexterously cast by a shovel the whole length of the threshing-floor against the wind once or twice and then sieved on a riddle." This method was

¹ That is, the thongs which bound the leather head to the handle. *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 131.

² Page 117.

³ *Evolution of the English Farm*, p. 31.

originally used for separating the small and light grains from the wheat that was wanted for sowing.

As no description of the winnowing fan appears to exist, it is very fortunate that there was a family living in Kent from the twelfth century to the seventeenth, whose name was Septvans, and who bore on their shield azure three winnowing fans or.¹ The memorials of this family are numerous in the north-eastern parts of Kent, the earliest being a very noble brass in the north transept of the church at Chatham. This commemorates the fifth Sir Robert Septvans who died in the year 1306 and was buried in the church, though not in the obscure corner of the north transept where his tomb now lies.

The larger fan on his shield and the seven smaller ones which adorn his surcoat and his ailets are carefully delineated and clearly show that the winnowing fan was woven like a basket, and was either made of wicker work or wicker and split laths. Those shown on this brass are very realistically treated, and the material in the *centres* appears to be, not round and twig-like, but made of flat thin slices of wood. It will be seen by the "rubbing" (at Fig. 32) that the mediæval fan had a concave shape designed to catch the air and drive it forward in any desired direction, and that its two handles were fixed on the outside of the over-hanging top.

These handles which were intended to give the operator a good grip on the fan are also well shown, carved in stone, on the ribs of the vaulting of the cloisters at Canterbury (Fig. 33.) This shield has three fans, two and one, with a crescent in the fess point for difference, and commemorates John Septvans of Ash next Sandwich, a younger brother of Sir William Septvans of Milton near Chatham, who is commemorated in a shield in another bay of the cloisters where the arms are the same, but without the crescent, and the fans are without handles. Sir William died in 1407 and was buried in the cathedral. There was formerly a monumental brass there incised with a helmet which no doubt marked his grave, as upon the mantling there were cut three small fans in a row. (Fig. 35.) In Planche's *A Corner of Kent* is a description of this crest of Sir William de Septvans, which he says is from

¹ The fans were originally seven, in allusion to the name.



FIG. 33.—Three winnowing-fans on a shield on the vaulting at Canterbury Cathedral cloisters

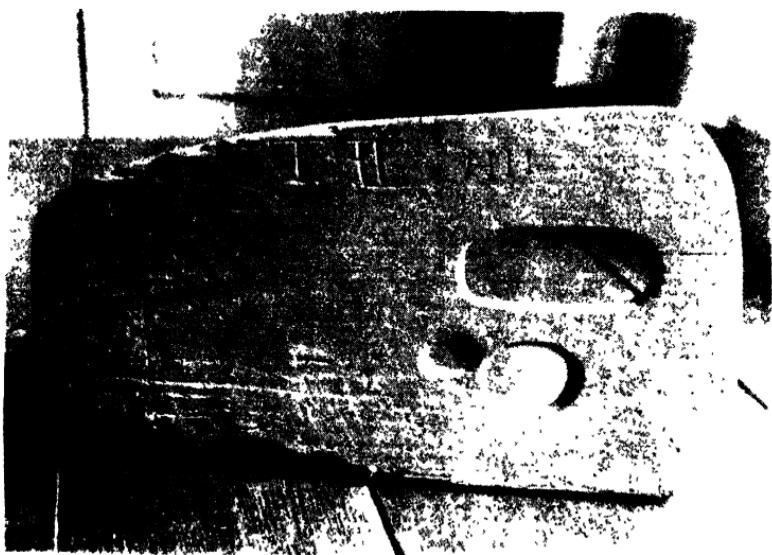


FIG. 34.—A wooden winnowing-fan

a drawing by Philipot in the College of Arms, taken from the brass which was in Canterbury Cathedral.

In the Molland Chapel at Ash next Sandwich, which was built on the north side of the chanccl by the Septvans family, is a very fine tomb to John Septvans and his wife, elaborately carved in alabaster, but unfortunately the winnowing fans were painted, not carved in relief, and they have totally disappeared. On the floor near to this monument is a very large slab with figures and shield in brass to Christopher Septvans and his wife with the date 1602. It has winnowing fans as a part of the charges, but they are so small and so much worn that they resemble large beetles, and are not worth rubbing. Another large slab next the above has much better preserved brasses and a border inscription, "Hic iacet corpus Walteri Septvanis 1626." It is curious that these winnowing fans have their handles inside the rim and that they are not like those on the early shields, but rather resemble round wicker-work lobster pots. In the south window of the south transept is a shield of the Septvan arms, azure 3 winnowing fans or 2 and one a crescent argent in fess point for differencce. The fans in this shield are very conventional, and suggest that they were drawn by a townsman who was not familiar with winnowing.

It has been suggested that the original members of this ancient family might have been farmers, but their proud motto, "As chaff before the wind so will I scatter, The enemis of my King," which shows that they were soldiers, and the fact that from the twelfth to the seventeenth century they all wore armour also shows that they were gentry.

From *The Whole Art of Husbandry*, by J. Mortimer:¹ "I wish some better Methods were found out for the Thrashing and Cleansing of Corn from the Chaff than is; and for those ways that are found out I think, for the Cleansing of Corn, that in most places the worst way is commonly made use of; which is either a Wicker-fan, or a fan with Sails: Whereas I am satisfied that one Man with a Casting-shovel which is used but in few places, will cleanse as much Corn in a Day, as four Men with either the Wicker or Sail-fan."

¹ Page 15, edition M.D.C.C.X.VI.

Tusser enumerates among Husbandly Furniture a "Flail, straw fork and rake, with a fan that is strong; Wing, cartnave and bushel, peck, strike ready to hand, get casting shovel and a sack with a band." In a footnote to this the Editor, Dr. Mavor, in 1812 says, "The straw-fork and rake were to turn the straw from off the threshed corn; and the fan and wing to clean it. A cart-nave might be required to stand on in this operation. A casting shovel, such as maltmen use, enables the farmer to select the best and heaviest corn for seed, as they always fly farthest if thrown with equal force."¹

Mavor's statement that the casting shovel is the same as the malt-shovel is just what one would expect, but it is good to turn a surmise into a fact. Most people know that a malt-shovel is entirely of wood and has a very broad blade. There is an early specimen at the Arden house at Wilmcote. The shovel was used for casting the corn along the floor of the barn, and no doubt the grain would out-strip the husks and leave them behind. I have seen no evidence that the sail-fan had been invented in the time of the Shakespeares, so do not dwell upon it here. In farm-houses a goose's wing is still used, but as a domestic implement only.

I never had any hope of seeing a winnowing fan, for wicker-work falls an easy prey to the burrowing of beetles and their larvae, but since the above words were written I received a box of more or less obsolete implements from a remote farm on the Carnarvonshire hills. In it was a slab of thinnish wood about the size of an artist's palette but thicker and having two oval holes in it, and a small recess obviously meant for the thumb of the operator. On thrusting my hand through the openings, it dawned upon me that it must be a winnowing fan. (Fig. 34.)

A passage in *Troilus and Cressida* is based on the best and heaviest grain remaining unmixed.

But in the wind and tempest of her frown
Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan
Puffing at all, winnows the light away;
And what hath mass or matter, by itself
Lies rich in virtue and unmixed."²

¹ Page 9, ed. 1812.

² Act I, Sc. 3.

Also in the 2nd Part of *King Henry IV*, Act 4, Scene 1.

We shall be winnow'd with so rough a wind
That even our corn shall seem as light as chaff,
And good from bad find no partition."

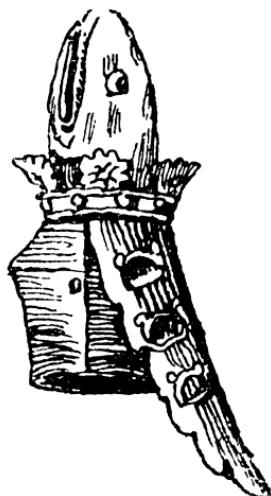


FIG 35.—Part of brass, now destroyed, showing three winnowing-fans

TUDOR SWINE

Besides the ordinary barn-door fowls, Richard Shakespeare no doubt had ducks and geese because he had a rivulet, he perhaps had "turkies" also. Pigs were numerous, but lank and much longer in the leg and snout than any of our modern breeds, which have been crossed with the plump and stodgy Chinese pig. In the old days they wandered about a great deal, but were yoked, generally in pairs, so that their power for mischief was limited. At Stratford unyoked pigs were forbidden. Among the "peines" at A View of Frankpledge, October 5, 1560, was the warning "yt no person have ther duckes or swyne goynge at lardge in the streetes nor ther Swyne in the stretes nor ther Swyne in bancroft nor in the lanes ther vn ryngyd nor vn yowkyd vnder peine for euery duk iijd and euery Swyne xxd."¹ About the same time, October 1560, Richard Shakespeare himself was fined 8d.

¹ Dugdale Society, vol. i, p. 106.

at a Manorial Court at Snitterfield for having his pigs unyoked and unringed (*non iugavit nec annulavit porcos suos*);¹ and as late as 1624, five people at Henley-in-Arden, including the High Bailiff, were fined various sums "for Swine vnringed and unoakt."² Among the documents relating to Pinley Priory in the possession of the late Edward G. Wheler-Galton, Esq., at Claverdon Leys, Warwick, a Court Baron in 1673 forbade any "Person to suffer his swine or piggs to go out of his yard unringed or unoaked upon pain of ijs." In the Corporation Book of Congleton, Cheshire, in 1584 under the Order "all the inhabitants shall keep their swine yoked and ringed" eight persons were fined 2d. each.³

In Tusser's book of Husbandry, the first edition of which was printed in 1557, he says: "Hunt with dog unyoked hog."⁴ The boar being often savage was kept in a specially strong sty called a "frank."⁵ Asking about Falstaff, Prince Henry says to Bardolph, "Whcre sups he? Doth the old boar feed in the old frank?" and Bardolph replies, "At the old place, my lord, in Eastcheap."⁶

The badge or cognisance of Richard III was the boar, and in the works of Shakespeare one is often reminded of it. "To fly the boar before the boar pursues, were to incense the boar to follow us."⁷ Queen Margaret in the first Act of *King Richard III* calls him "Thou elvish-mark'd abortive rooting hog!"⁸ and "boar" in an abusive sense is often applied to him. In the same Act King Richard says of Clarence whom he is keeping in prison, "Marry, as for Clarence he is well repaide. He is frank'd up to fatting for his pains:"⁹ and in Act IV Lord Stanley says, "Sir Christopher, tell Richmond this from me: That in the sty of the most deadly boar My son George Stanley is frank'd up in hold."¹⁰ In the *Household Book* of

¹ Court Rolls of Snitterfield now at the Birthplace.

² *Records of Henley-in-Arden*, p. 99.

³ *Journal of the Archaeological and Historical Society of Chester*, p. 365.

⁴ Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, p. 118, edition 1812.

⁵ At Christmas 1521 "three boars furious and fell" were bought for the household of Princess Mary at Ditton Park and painters were paid viij. for decorating "le Borys hede."

⁶ *Second Part of King Henry IV*, Act II, Sc. 2.

⁷ *Richard III*, Act III, Sc. 2. ⁸ Ib. ⁹ Ib., Act I, Sc. 3. ¹⁰ Ib., Act IV, Sc. 5.



XXVII

FIG. 35A.—Worcester misericord. Knocking down acorns for pigs



FIG. 36.—Panel at Abingdon Hall. Knocking down acorns to feed swine

Lord Wm. Howard of Naworth Castle in 1621 is an item
“To Rob. Burthom for mending a boar Frank iiijd.”¹

In his Calendar of Letter-books of the City of London, Dr. R. R. Sharpe gives an abstract translated from the Latin, of an ordinance relating to pigs wandering in the streets or lanes, which contains this passage: “Whoever wishes to feed his pigs let him feed them in the open (*in franco*) away from the King’s highway, or in his house, under heavy penalty.”² But to feed them “*in franco*” meant to feed them in their frank or sty; feeding them in the open would have been the very reverse of what was intended. Tusser gives many morsels of good advice concerning pigs. Heed is to be taken of “ravelling mastiffs, and hogs that eat fowls.”³ Also to gather up mast before it has all gone, and to remember that though “mast fats up swine” yet it “kills kine.”⁴ “Let hogs be rung, both old and young.” When “no mast is on the oak, No longer unyoke”; that is, when the acorns are all done, and the pigs come back from the woods, see that their yokes are again put on them. “Hogs haunting corn may not be borne.”

Again, in “September’s Husbandry” he says, “Yoke seldom thy swine, while shack time doth last.” The shaking of oak branches with poles to feed the pigs is often depicted in old carvings of stone and wood, in England and abroad. There is a fine instance on a capital of the south transept at Wells, and on a porch at the north face of Chartres.

One has to remember that the swine of our ancestors were near relations to the wild boar, and had many of his habits and characteristics. In the misericords of our ancient churches they are shown with shaggy bristles and strong tusks. There are fine carvings of the swine-herd shaking down acorns to feed pigs, on misericords at Worcester (Fig. 35), Malvern, and Ripple in Worcestershire, and also at Lincoln and York. On a capital of the Chapter House of York Minster an oak is carved, with squirrels in the branches and pigs at the foot. Men knocking down acorns to feed pigs in the woods is often

¹ *Household Book*, p. 195.

² *Letter Book A*, p. 217.

³ Page xxvi, 1816 edition.

⁴ Page 22, 1816 edition. Mast in this case included acorns; when used in modern times it means beech-nuts.

the emblem for November and December. On a beautiful twelfth-century leaden font at Brookland in Kent the months of November and December are represented by a man who wears a tall conical cap and a long gaberdine, and who is feeding swine by knocking down the mast. On one of the capitals of the nave arcade at St. Mary's Wolborough, near Newton Abbot, Devon, a very bristly boar is chewing acorns off a branch of oak.

Tusser continues, "While shack time endureth, men use not to yoke: Yet surely ringling is needful and good, Till frost do invite them, to brake in the wood." This would appear to mean that the pigs when the oaks are being shaken are not yoked, but putting rings in their noses is still needful, till cold weather induces them to stay amongst the dead bracken in the woods, and (according to the following under November's Abstract) to eat the roots thereof, "Get pole boy mine! Beat haws to swinc. Drive hog to the wood, Brake-roots be good." I have seen half a dozen turkeys wade into a pond in order to eat the haws on hawthorn bushes, but I have never heard of pigs eating them or rooting up the underground stems of bracken in order to eat them, which they could easily do in the leaf mould of woods.

At Coventry in 1547 swine were liable to be impounded if found on the common, except "That they shall not ympounde any Swyne in maystyme beiynge lawfully rynghed." That is, that no pig which had a ring in its nose and therefore could not root up the turf of the common, should be impounded during the time when there was mast (acorns, etc.) on the trees.¹

At Abington Hall, in a series of carved panels, is one which represents swine feeding in woods. It is very realistic in everything but the proportions. The man who is knocking down acorns is as tall as the oak tree, and the acorns are much larger than the man's feet. Still, nothing could be more pig-like than the swine, and the acorns could never be mistaken for anything else. The tree also has leaves which are carefully shaped into oak leaves. (Fig. 36.)

It seems that at great houses they fattened pigs with acorns,

¹ *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 787.

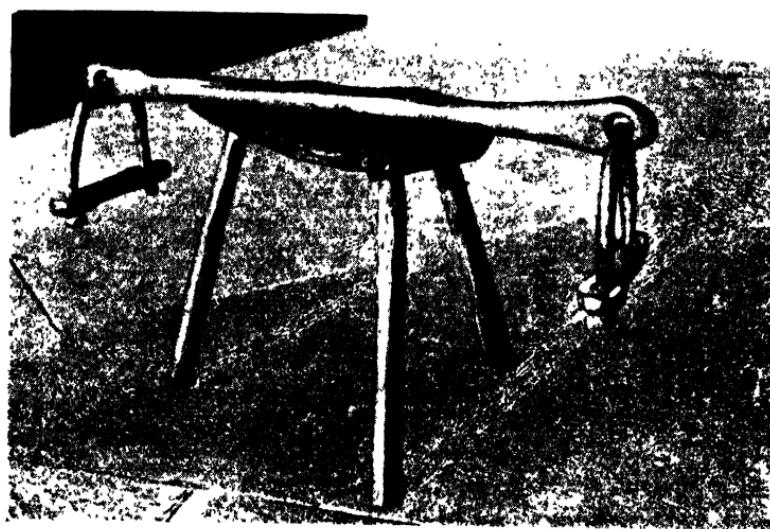


FIG. 37.—Ram-yoke at National Museum of Wales, Cardiff



Photograph by

[Cardiff Museum

FIG. 38.—One end of a ram-yoke

for instance at the enormous moated mansion, Hengrave in Suffolk, the widow of Sir Thomas Kytson gave "xxvs, vjd for x combe acornes for the swine" in November 1574.¹

I had often wondered what a pig-yoke could possibly have been like, but never could find any direct evidence on the subject. There are plenty of ancient carvings of pigs feeding in woods, or pigs being killed or cut up, but under none of those conditions did they ever wear yokes. It was an intriguing problem, which I had long pondered in vain, when one day it suddenly occurred to me that I had once seen a pig-yoke, or something that might have been one. In the winter of 1924 I was examining the wonderful collection of obsolete implements in the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff and was much puzzled by a curious item, the purpose of which I could not understand. The Museum was not then finished and this collection had not been catalogued, nor at that time was there anyone available who knew what the object in question was. However, more than eight years after, I still had a vivid recollection of it, and sent a sketch from memory to the Secretary asking what it was, but without saying why I was interested in it. The reply explained that the mysterious object was a ram-yoke, the use of which had survived to modern times in some of the wilder districts of Wales, for driving rams to market, for preventing them burrowing through hedges, and to keep them from fighting one another. This convinced me that a pig-yoke, as I had suspected, was practically the same thing. I found confirmation of this in an Item of the Household Book of Lord William Howard of Naworth Castle, "the swine hirdd for his quarter's wages 11 June 1624, vjs viijd. For bowinge swine iiijd."² A footnote to this by the Editor, Dr. Mavor in 1812, says, "Putting a yoke or bow round their necks to prevent their getting into mischief by breaking through fences." Evidently it had been found that single rams like single pigs could get into all sorts of mischief, while pairs yoked together were comparatively harmless. The Museum authorities kindly had the photographs at Figs. 37 and 38 taken for me, by which it will be

¹ Gage's *Antiquities of Hengrave*, p. 203.

² Surtees Society, vol. 68, p. 323.

seen that the implement consists of two small bows, connected by a stout wooden rod having a hole at each end, in which the bows worked loosely. One may hazard the speculation that a pig-yoke would be somewhat shorter in the rod so that the animals would not be quite so far apart.

Several commentators have marvelled at the cheapness of the pigs which are mentioned in the inventory of Robert Arden's widow. For instance Mr. J. Quincey Adams says that "five score pigges" were appraised at 13s. and 4d. which would be a trifle over three half-pence each.¹ But he has taken the word "score" to mean twenty pigs, whereas it really means twenty pounds avoirdupois. There is no probability of Agnes Arden having possessed a hundred pigs worth 1½d. each. What she had were five pigs, each of them weighing roughly about a "score."

Since writing the above I have been surprised to find that pig-yokes were used as late as the first half of the nineteenth century. William Cobbett in his book, *Cottage Economy*, printed in 1823, says: "Even in *lanes*, or on the sides of great roads, a pig will find a good part of his food from May to November, and if he be *yoked* the occupiers of the neighbourhood must be churlish and brutish indeed if they give the owner any annoyance."²

ROOT CROPS

In the time of Richard Shakespeare root crops and artificial grasses were not established in England, and the problem of keeping the farm stock through the winter was usually met by killing off a certain proportion of the animals and salting down the meat, especially beef and bacon. For this reason the months of November and December are often indicated by scenes in which these animals are being killed. In one of the misericords at Worcester a butcher is felling an ox, and at Abington the same subject is carved on a panel; and in stained glass, stonework, and oaken misericords the killing of swine is often shown. For the month of December, a rich feast is depicted in the panel at Abington. (Fig. 39.)

¹ J. Quincy Adams' *Life of William Shakespeare*, p. 10.

² Par. 143. The pages are not numbered.



FIG. 39 Month of December
A rich feast

Killing an ox
Panel at Abingdon Hall



FIG. 40.—Wicker-work hives of ancient pattern

[To face page 108]

The emblems of the months, the seasons, and the signs of the Zodiac were frequently depicted, from Classical times down to the sixteenth century. In Vol. XLIV of *Archaeologia*¹ Mr. James Fowler in a long paper has given a full account of many Continental instances. In the course of time the representations of the months became standardized; for instance, the vintage was used for autumn when wine-making had almost ceased in England, and among other places it is carried on one of the panels at Abington.

SHEEP

One cannot say how many sheep Richard Shakespeare had. Robert Arden had fifty priced at £7. His widow had thirty-eight, and left sheep to various young relatives.

Markham says, "The sheep upon Cotsal hills are of better bone, shape, and burthen, but their staple is courser and deeper. The sheep in that part of Worcestershire which joyneth on to Warwickshire and many parts of Warwickshire beareth a large-boned Sheep of the best shape and deepest staple chiefly if they be Pasture-Sheep, yet is their wool courser than that of Cotsal."² Later he says, "The Lear which is the earth on which a Sheep lyeth, and giveth him his colour, is much to be respected; the red Lear is held the best; the duskith, inclining to a little redness is tolerable; but the white or dirty Lear is stark naught." The Cotswold hills were a feature of Richard Shakespeare's horizon, and a field of red marl called Red Hill was a part of his son Henry's farm.

In the Steward's accounts of the Vernon family preserved at Haddon Hall, is the entry under April 20, 1550: "It. For Tar ffor my masters shepe at haddon vjd." "It. ye iiiij daye of november vnto Edwardre deye for iij stoyne of pyche for ye use of my masters shepe iiijs." "It. payd ye viij daye of junc for di [half] a stone of swines grcs [grease] for ye use of my masters shepe the prysse xxd." "It. delyured vnto Wyllm berdall ye xiith of june for ye dryvinge of xl shepe from haddon for my masters folde at Harleston the some xiid." "It. also spysse [spice] bowght ye daye aforeseyde for ye

¹ Page 137.

² *Gervase Markham*, p. 85.

shepe sherynge viijd." This recalls the clown in the *Winter's Tale*: "Let me see what am I to buy for our sheep-shearing feast? saffron to colour the warden pies; nutmegs seven; a race or two of ginger" (Act IV, Scene 2). "It. payde ye xvijth daye of junc vnto iiij^{xx} & iiij (4 score and 4) sherers whyche dyd shere all my mrs. shepe the some of xiijs."

"It. payde y^t [that] same vnto viij Radlers [markers with raddle] of my M^{rs} shepe xvj." "It. also payde y^t same daye unto viij lappers of wholle [those who rolled up the fleeces] ijs. viij^d." "It. Payde ye xvij of June aforescyd unto xxx washers of all my M^{rs} sayde sheppe vs."

BEES

Undoubtedly Richard Shakespeare kept bees, as wax and honey were in great demand and sugar but little used, of course all sugar was imported and the conquest of Egypt by the Turks stopped much of it.¹ In his time nearly everybody had numerous hives, and bees were given to churches, bequeathed in wills, and sometimes housed in the church tower. In 1479 the Warden's Accounts for St. Edmunds, New Sarum, records: "It. recd of Robert a Neve for iij hyves of been sold to him x" and in 1481 Roger Howe of Melford leaves "to myn wyfē all myn hyvys with beyn that is to seyn 11 quyke [living] and vi idell [idle] hyvs."

In 1500 William Wright of Bishopthorpe, left "to my parish kirke an old stok of bees wt a swarm, to ye upholdyng of a serge of V pond² before ye sepucirc. To my curate iijs. iiijd. to pray for me, and a swarm of bees. To Sir Christopher Wright a swarm of bees."³ In the will of John Robinson, Rector of Ashton on Mersey, dated 1579, he says, "Item, I Doe gyve Etc. to the use of ye churche of Assheton all thosse my bee-howses yt I schall fortune to have at ye tyme of my Deathe to be sett abrowde in ye parysse by the Discretion of Thomas Williamson and he to ov'see ye same During hys lyffe and ev' to place them were he thynges good."⁴

¹ Roger's *History of Agriculture and Prices*.

² A large candle weighing five pounds.

³ *Testa. Ebor.*, vol. liii, p. 175.

⁴ *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills*, p. 96.

Tusser's advice is, "Place hive in good aier, set southly and warm, And take in duc season wax, honey and swarm."

Hives at that time were generally made of wicker coated with clay, and thatched with straw. In the seventeenth century these were becoming obsolete, but about 1680 Dr. Plot discovered some in North Staffordshire, "a sort of Bee-hives they have in this County, quite different from any used in the South of England, which they make of Osier-twiggs interwoven like a basket, and then plastered over with a mixture of Clay and Cowdung, or as I saw some at Mr. Rudyard's at the Abbey of Dieu le Crese, dawbed over with a Composition of Cow-dung and turff-Ess [ash] and over that again with Lime. Which seem only to be the hives of ancient times still retained here. Virgill, Columella and Palladius all testifying that they were made of such twiggs in their days. . . . Over all this they put a straw hood, as in the Southern Counties, to keep the hony from melting in the Summer and to cast off the rain and keep the bees warm in winter."¹

Mortimer's *Whole Art of Husbandry* says, in 1707, "Several sorts of Hives are used in several Countries, but the general sort used in *England* is Wicker-hives made of Privet, Willow, or Harl² daub'd with Cow-dung temper'd with Dust, Ashes, or Sand; or Hives made with Straw bound with Brambles."³ As Dr. Plot was making notes of remarkable things seen in his travels, in the middle of the seventeenth century, it seems probable that Mortimer was mistaken in supposing that the usual kind of hive in the early eighteenth century was of wicker-work. They may have been "the general sort" where he lived, but Dr. Plot had traversed more districts than most people and found the wicker-hives to be a curious and noteworthy discovery.

These methods of bee-keeping which Plot described, in the seventeenth century as having lingered in Staffordshire to his days are no doubt the same which Robert Arden and Richard Shakespeare would see every day. I did once see a

¹ Plot's *History of Staffordshire*, 1686, p. 385.

² I think this is a misprint for Hazel, Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic Words*, says "Harle, hair or wool."

³ Mortimer, vol. i, p. 269.

row of Gothic-looking hives at a lonely water-mill in Herefordshire, where I was sketching with my father in 1887; they were made of wicker-work plastered with some kind of mortar, and Mr. Alfred Watkins of Hereford photographed them while I was there (Fig. 40): an example from the far distant past which has no doubt disappeared long ago; they were pointed at the top, and were more slender than the bulky straw skeps that superseded them. Perhaps the bees found them more like their primeval homes in hollow tree-trunks. A rare and interesting survival, so far as England is concerned; but a few years ago in the ancient Breton town of Vitré, I noticed some odd-looking wicker objects of tapering form exposed for sale outside a shop, and was staring at them in some perplexity, till an old woman passing by explained that they were for bees.

Treating of the nature, ordering and preservation of Bees, Gervase Markham (1676) says: "Of all the creatures which are behovful for the use of man, there is nothing more necessary, wholesome, or more profitable than the Bee; nor any less troublesome or less chargeable; it is a creature gentle, loving and familiar about the man which hath the ordering of them, so he come sweet and cleanly amongst them, otherwise if he have strong and ill-smelling savours about him they are curst and malicious, and will sting spitefully; they are exceeding industrious and much given to labour, they have a kind of government amongst themselves, as it were a well ordered Common-wealth, every one obeying and following their King or Commander, whose voice (if you lay your ear to the hive) you shall distinguish from the rest, being louder and greater, and beating with a more solemn measure. They delight among the sweetest herbs and flowers, that may be, especially Fennel and Wall Gilly flowers and therefore their best dwellings are in Gardens: . . . This Garden also would be well fenced, that no Swine nor other Cattel may come therein, as well for overthrowing their Hives, as also for offending them with their ill savours."

Of hives he says, "there be divers opinions touching the same; for in the Champion Countries where there is very little store of wood they make their Hives of long Rye Straw,



FIG. 41.—Row of nineteenth-century hives

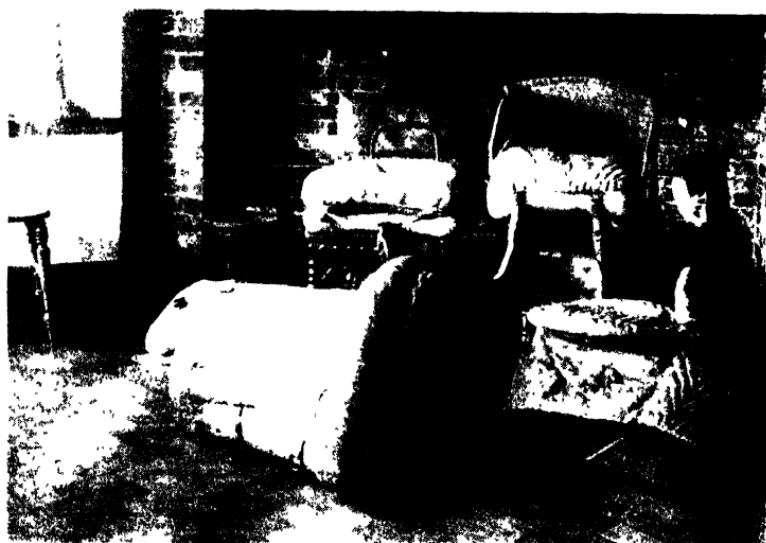


FIG. 43.—Pack-saddle, lady's side-saddle and two pillions

the rous being sowed together with Bryers; and these Hives are large and deep and even proportioned like a Sugar-loaf, and cross-barr'd within with flat splints of Wood, both above and under the midst part. In other Champion Countries where they want Rye-straw they make them of Wheat-straw, as in the West Countries, and these hives are of a large compass but very low and flat, which is naught, for a hive is



FIG. 42.—Straw Hives, 1870.

better for his largeness and keepeth out the rain best when it is sharpest. In the wood countries they make them of cloven hazels, wattel'd about with broad splints of Ash, and so formed, as before I said, like a Sugar-loaf. These Hives are of all other the best, so they be large and smooth within, for the Straw-hive is subject to breed Mice, and nothing destroyeth Bees sooner than they.

“Now for the Wood-hive¹ which is the best, you shall thus trim and prepare it for your Bees: you shall first make a stiff morter of Lime and Cow-dung mixed together, and then having cross barred the Hive within, daub the out-side of

¹ By this, of course, the wicker hive is meant.

the Hive with the morter at least three inches thick, down close unto the stone, so that the least Air may not come in: then take a Rye-sheaf, or Wheat-sheaf or two that is baled, and not thrashed, and chusing out the longest straws bind the years together in one lump, put it over the Hive and so as it were thatch it all over, and fix it close to the Hive with an old hoop, and this will keep the Hive inwardly as warm as may be; also before you lodge any Bee in your hive you shall perfume it with Juniper, and rub it all within with Fennel, Hyssop and Time-flowers and also the Stone upon which the Hive shall stand.”¹

HORSES, CARTS, ETC.

Horses in the time of Richard Shakespeare and Robert Arden had been much improved in consequence of the measures taken by Henry VIII, to organize their breeding, and were of various sizes and types. According to Harrison, “Our horsses are high and although not commonlie of such huge greatnesse as in other places of the maine, yet if you respect the easinessse of their pase, it is hard to saie where their like are to be had.

. . . Our cart or plough horsses (for we use them indifferently) are commonlie so strong that five (or six of them at the most) will draw three thousand weight of the greatest tale with ease for a long iourneie, although it be not a load of common vsage, which consisteth onlie of two thousand, or fiftie foot of timber, fortie bushels of white salt, or six and thirtie of baie, or five quarters of wheat, experience daily teacheth. Such as are kept also for burden, will carie four hundred weight commonlie without anie hurt or hindrance. . . . Such as serve for the saddle are commonlie gelded, and now growne to be verie deere among vs, especiallie if they be well coloured, iustly limmed and haue thereto an easie ambling pase.”

Harrison mentions among the “notable markets, wherein great plentie of horsses and colts is bought and sold, and whereunto such as have need resort yearelle to buie,” one at

¹ Markham's *Cheap and Good Husbandry*, pp. 137-139, thirteenth edition, 1679.

"Harborow," which may be the Warwickshire town of Market Harborough, on the upper reaches of the Avon.

Robert Arden at his death in 1556 had four horses and three colts valued at £8; his widow left in 1581 three horses and one mare worth £4. Richard Shakespeare, being a tenant farmer on a modest scale, is not likely to have had so many.

No inventory of his goods is known to exist, but letters of administration were issued to his son John at the close of the year 1560.¹ We might credit him perhaps with three horses, which would enable him to reach Warwick or Stratford with ease and dignity. Nobody in his day would walk if they could ride, not even the young, and Richard Shakespeare when we learn anything about him was not young. Everybody who could afford it rode on horseback, the women and girls usually on pillions seated sideways behind a man—father, husband, brother or perhaps servant—with her one hand holding his belt.

There are several pillions in the Wilmcote collection, all of which I found locally. One of them is Elizabethan, made of green velvet, and much faded since it was taken out of an old chest at Cleeve Prior Manor-house. It is banded with lace made of silver wire, parts of which were pilfered by visitors while it was lent to an exhibition. I think this may have been a side-saddle. At Haddon Hall is mentioned in the *Steward's Accounts* "Disburst then [1630] for a velvet side-saddle & all furniture imbrodered with silver."

Pillions were sometimes quilted with stitched patterns. (Fig. 43.) In 1621 "dressinge a pillion seate" cost the Shuttleworths ijs. 6d.² In 1631 Ann Holme left "to my daughter Elline j pilyanseat."³ Horses were much used for the carriage of goods. In the *Steward's Accounts* of the Shuttleworths, 1596, is this note of expenses in the making of a pack-saddle, "for a hedstale, a rennye and a cropper⁴ to the sumpter sadle ijs iiijd; the mail trasses of the sumpter sadle ijs; twoc poundes of glue and two poundes of flockes and a halfe ijs. iijd; stone

¹ J. W. Gray, *Shakespeare's Marriage*, pp. 259–260.

² *Stewards' Accounts*, p. 249.

³ Surtees Society, *Knaresborough Wills*, p. 120.

⁴ For a head-stall, a rein, and a crupper.

nales, stock nailes, clagge nales, and brass nailes to the sumpter saddle ijs. iijd. halfe a dogge skinne, foure yardes of garthe webbe and packe-thridre xvijd.”¹ I do not know what stone nails were, but they were sometimes bought by the Guild of Stratford on Avon.

The Elizabethan saddle had a framework constructed of wood, and was covered with leather and stuffed with flock. In the same Accounts are numerous items of expense for mending them. In 1589 they spent eightpence “for mendinge of trunke saddelles and pak saddles”² and in 1590 sixpence for “a pounde of flokes to mend thrie lode saddlyes vld.”³

In 1430 Alice the relict of Peter Upstall of York left saddles called packsaddles, pack cloths, a saddle and bridle and “pak-prykkes.”⁴ These last were for laying various kinds of burdens on the backs of horses. They were made from selected branches of trees, each of which had a crook at right angles, and were lashed together at the top so as to hang down in pairs on each side of the horse. All sorts of wares were suspended pannier-wise on these wooden hooks. When I was a boy a number of horses laden in that manner used to bring country produce every market-day into the ancient city of Dinan. There was no railway there then, and all its walls, moats and City Gates were intact. The market there in the Place du Guesclin was a most interesting sight, and I remember being much attracted by the peculiarity of these odd wooden hooks hanging on the pack-horses.

In *La Livre de Chasse*, the celebrated manuscript of Gaston de Foix, executed about 1450, there are many illuminations, in which horses and their various kinds of trappings are very clearly depicted. In one of them, the subject of which is “Breaking up the Stag,” there is a drawing of a sumpter-horse (Fig. 44) on whose back is placed a well-filled sack resting in a wooden cratch or rack, and below this the wooden “pack-pricks” are plainly visible.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were somewhat similar arrangements which were used on horses but were

¹ *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 107.

² Page 55.

³ Page 57.

⁴ Et Adae famulo meo sellas vocatas paksadyls, pakclothes sellam cum freno, et pakprykkes.—*Test. Ebor.*, vol. xxx, p. 9.



FIG. 44.—Pack-horse, showing pack-prykes

made with chains and iron hooks. These were called "barrel ferrys" because they were irons chiefly used for carrying small barrels of wine. In 1514, among the preparations for the Earl of Northumberland when he went to the siege of Turwin in France, were "It'm, iij p'e of barrell ferrys, wt chaynes and houkks of iron to carry wyn with my Lord upon horses."¹

As illustrating the gear of those times, the inventory of a saddler taken in 1592 at Newcastle² is interesting. There were "In the shoppe: Thre dozen and a halfe of rydinge trees 10s. 6d." These were the wooden foundations for 42 riding saddles before they had been stuffed and covered with leather. The next item "16 lode trees 8s" were probably of much the same shape but larger, being for pack-saddles. "2 side trees 2s" were for making side-saddles for ladies. "8 paire of stirrapp ledgers 4s. 6 sadle-trees reddie for the coveringe 12s" "3 oxen hides and a bull hide 36s. 8d. 4 horse skynnes and a half, 8s." "Two yellowe cotten saidle, 6s. A red carsey saidle 4s. A blew and chek saidle 6s. 8d" were no doubt finished and ready to sell. Portions of the wooden parts which were left uncovered were painted with bright colours, something like Scandinavian horse trappings are, or used to be, and the yellow, red, and blue saddles would have the wooden parts painted to accord with the covers.

The Saddlers of London had many quarrels with two other City Companies, the Joiners, who were charged with aiding truant apprentices and deceitful persons who resorted to the woods near the City and there made the bows of saddles of green wood, which afterwards warped; and the Painters with painting old saddles so that they could be passed off as new ones.³

In 1590 the Shuttleworths paid two and fourpence for "panelling of Sir Rychard Shuttleworth's saddell, garthe wyebbe vjd"⁴ "for making iij horscollers to drawe in, for panneling ij lode saddles and a carte saddle, and for mendinge ye horse geares xxijd; iij yardes of canvas to lyne ye said

¹ Printed in the *Antiquarian Repertory*, vol. i, p. 370.

² Surtees Society, vol. 112, p. 152.

³ W. C. Hazlitt, *Livery Companies of London*, p. 543.

⁴ *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 60.

saddles xxjd."¹ In 1594 to the saddler of Bolton, "for paninge of the sumpter saddle and mendinge the strappes for the same, and for bucklinge of eight garthes xxd."² That is, for putting buckles on eight girths. A panel was a kind of cloth put on the horse's back beneath the saddle. For the horses of well-to-do people these cloths were of rich materials but not those for load-horses.

In Best's *Farming Book*, a seventeenth-century manuscript written by Henry Best of Elmswell in Yorkshire, for the guidance of his sons (printed by the Surtees Society), is a long account of sending off strings of Pack-horses laden with corn which was put in "three bushell poakes and laid six bushells on an horse."³ He continues: "On markett-dayes our folkes doe as on other dayes, for soe soone as they rise they make and give to every two horses a bottle of hey, and that serveth them till their pannells bee sette on, and what is left is there ready for them against the time they come hoame; then, soe soone as theirre pannells are on, and everything fitted, they leade them forth, and looke howe many each man goeth with, and soe many are tyed together each in others tayle; then doe they carry one company after another to the garner doore, and turninge them aboute with their heade towards the gates, all the fellowes that are able to carry poakes fall to loadinge, and give every horse half his loade before that any one bee wholly loaden. Then one setteth open the broad gates; the other folkes goe usually with them till their poakes begin to sattle and lye well."⁴ The inventory of Robert Arden in 1556 shows that he had "carte and carte-geares, plogh and plogh-geares with harrowes" priced at 40 shillings. His widow's inventory in 1581 gives "wayne and wayne-geares, plowe and plow-geares, carte and cart-geares" 30 shillings.

I have indicated, in writing of the traffic over Clopton Bridge, that wagons and carts were generally put away under sheds in the late autumn because of the badness of the winter roads. Henry Best of Elmswell remarked that in 1641 the first time that wains were seen was the 30th of April, and there were as many as six on the 21st of May.⁵

¹ *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 89.

² Page 100.

⁴ Page 101.

³ Ib., p. 100.

⁵ Ib., vol. 33, p. 102.

Carts and wagons varied in size and pattern. In a 1590 inventory "ijj longe waines as they stand and ijj ironbound coupwaines as they stand and j ox harowe" are mentioned.¹ Coupe waines are explained in various Glossaries and also in *N.E.D.* as being carts or wains made close with boards, but in the goods of Roger Widdrington in 1572 were "Cowpe

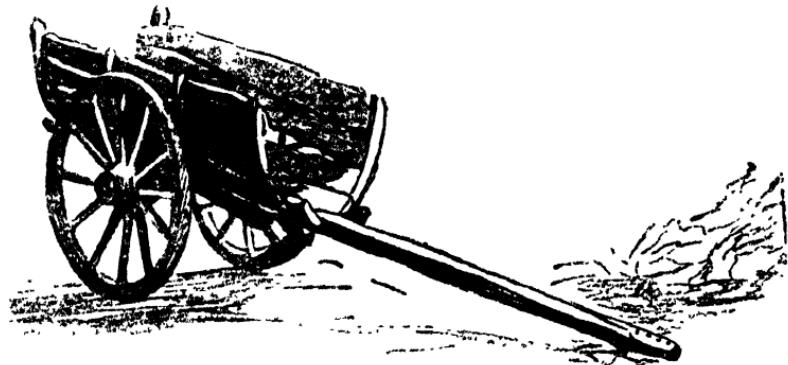


FIG. 45.—A Breton Coupe, drawn in 1875

waynes of wandes."² Probably these were wattled with hazel rods, for coupe-wains were generally made of bent-boards, also many wains were open and the sides made only of sticks, as may be seen for example in the Luttrell Psalter. Coupes were often used for carting manure, probably because their sides were closed with boards and not with sticks. (Fig. 45.) An inventory in Knaresborough Wills notes "one ould dung cowpc and a gavelocke."³ "Coupes pro firmo" are mentioned in the Account Rolls of Finchale Priory, and the Editor, Canon James Raine, translates it: "Carts for leading manure, so called, not, as Mr. Brockett states from their being able to be *couped* or turned up in order to be emptied, but from having their sides and ends not of open rail work, but *cowped* or tubbed with boards."⁴ Here Canon Raine is certainly right. But see Appendix II.

¹ Surtees Society, *Wills and Inventories*, vol. 11, p. 185. ² Ib., p. 374.

³ Page 12. A gavelock was a crow-bar.

⁴ *Priory of Finchale*, p. lxi.

HORSE BREAD

Shakespeare does not mention "horse bread," but there was plenty of it made and used in his lifetime. To make it Gervase Markham recommends taking "two busels of good clean beans and one bushel of wheat, and grind them together; then through a fine range, bolt out the quantity of two pecks of pure meal, and bake it in two or three loaves by itself, and the rest sift through a meal sive, and knead it with water and good store of barme, and so bake it in great loaves. With the courser bread feed your horse in his rest, and with the finer against the days of sore labour."¹

In 1482 the Mayor and Council of York at a meeting at the Hall on Ouse Bridge, ordained that as long as the price of beans was iij*s* or above, "every baxter of thys cite shall sell thre hors loffs for 1*d*, and that every hors loffe shall weye thre pound."² Horses were often pastured on the commons or tethered on the balks of champion land, and were thus liable to be purloined by unscrupulous marauders. To prevent this, collars of iron on which the owner's name was engraved, were locked on their necks, not to tether them but to preserve their identity. This habit is illustrated by a passage in *Cymbeline*, where the hero Posthumus is thrust into prison, and two Gaolers are sneering at him. The First Gaoler says, "You shall not now be stolen, you have locks upon you; So graze as you find pasture." "Ay," says the Second Gaoler, "or a stomach."³

The Stratford on Avon Guild sometimes paid for horse-bread, when men rode to neighbouring places to buy pullets, pigs, geese, etc., for their Feasts. In the Guild Accounts in 1441 is an item of 2*d.* for a horse to go to Bydford, when a penny also was spent for horse-bread.⁴

¹ Book I, p. 52.

² Act V, Sc. 4.

³ Surtees Society, *York Memorandum Book*, p. 170.

⁴ *Guild Accounts*, p. 26.

Chapter V

Stained Cloths

Not only because the poet's grandfather Robert Arden had as many as eleven painted cloths are these decorative hangings worthy of study, but also because in the Stratford district they were exceptionally numerous, and in the works of Shakespeare they are often mentioned.

It is desirable, therefore, to discover as much as possible concerning them, more especially as the little that has, so far, been written about them is in the nature of guesswork, and is often misleading. Even Sir Lionel Cust in an article in *Shakespeare's England*¹ says that they "were probably introduced by Italian artists early in the sixteenth century," and he goes on to say "they are usually carefully distinguished from 'pictures in tables or paintings on panels' and are important in the history of art since the painted or stained cloth was the forerunner of the painting on canvas, which gradually displacing the painting on panel, was almost universally adopted."

Sir Lionel Cust was mistaken, not only in supposing that they were introduced by Italian artists, but also in assuming that a painted cloth was the same thing as a stained one, a mistake into which all the other commentators have fallen.² In actual fact the art of the stainer was absolutely different to that of the painter, and till the reign of Henry VII the two crafts were organized in two separate companies. Moreover, both the stained and the painted cloths were being made here by natives of England, centuries before the sixteenth century

¹ Vol. ii, p. 2.

² Also Dr. J. C. Cox on p. 132 of *Churchwarden's Accounts* gives "a list of stained, i.e. painted cloths."

had dawned. They were hangings, not only for decorating the walls but also to keep out draughts of air when used in houses and to act as "veils" and curtains when used in churches. "Tables" were nearly always paintings on panels, from the Middle Ages down to Queen Mary's time. No doubt the word came from the French *tableau*. What we call a table was then called a "board." Three instances occur in the Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess Mary. In 1542 "It'm to maisters Dakers s'unte, bringing a Table w^t a picture vijs. vjd," and again in 1544 the following, "It'm pd to one John that drue her grace in a table" V.Li [£5].¹ In 1556 Richard Baker a valet gave to Queen Mary "a table painted, of the woman of Samarya."²

It may be well to state here, as definitely as the ascertainable facts allow, what a stained cloth was. The stainers were producing by means of water-colours, hangings generally of linen but sometimes of hemp or wool, covered with figure-subjects or decorative patterns, for the ornamentation of the walls of churches or houses. On the other hand the painter's guild embraced several different crafts, some of which were chiefly engaged, by means of various sorts of paint, size, oil, varnish, etc., in painting the external timber-work of buildings, generally houses and shops. Some of them were occupied in preparing the materials for painting. Others did chiefly heraldic work, hatchments and achievements, painting of carved fire-places, images and screenwork in churches. But the higher grades of the occupation were painters of what we call "pictures," i.e. portraits on panels, and elaborate subjects taken from the Bible, from the Greek and Roman mythologies, and from the history and traditions of Great Britain. These subjects they painted not only on panels and the plastered interior walls of churches and houses, but very often upon linen and hempen "cloths" for wall-hangings.

THE MAKING OF STAINED CLOTHS

Hangings of coloured linen are of great antiquity. As early as the seventh century Aldhelm speaks of "the hangings or

¹ Page 168.

² Page 209.

curtains being stained with purple and other colours and ornamented with images";¹ though until the thirteenth century there seems but little evidence to be found concerning them. The only description of their making that I have been able to find was discovered by a Mrs. Merrifield, who in the "forties" of the nineteenth century was in Italy, seeking materials for her work on *The Ancient Practice of Painting*, and who found in a monastery an old manuscript in which a fifteenth-century Italian had written notes concerning certain recipes for the making of "coloured waters." These he had caused to be copied from parts of a still older document, to the effect that in the year 1410 Johannes Alcherius was at Bologna, where he became acquainted with one Theodore an embroiderer who was a native of Flanders, and who gave him certain directions "for the making of the same coloured waters, which the same Theodore had procured at London in England."² He then adds, "After the aforesaid, it was thus written in the before mentioned MS. The aforesaid Theodore told me that in England the painters work with these waters upon closely woven cloths, wetted with gum-water made with gum-arabic and then dried, and afterwards stretched out on the floor of the solar upon thick woollen and frieze cloths; and the painters walking with their clean feet over the said cloths, work and paint upon them figures, stories, and other things. And because these cloths lie stretched on a flat surface, the coloured waters do not flow and spread in painting upon them, but remain where they are placed, and the watery moisture sinks into the woollen cloth which absorbs it; and even the touches of the paintbrush made with these waters do not spread, because the gum with which, as already mentioned, the cloth is wetted prevents their spreading. And when the cloths are thus painted, their texture is not thickened or darkened any more than if they had not been painted because the aforesaid watery colours have not sufficient body to thicken the cloth."

It is noteworthy that the knowledge of the methods used in the art of Staining had been obtained in England, and that

¹ T. Wright, *Domestic Manners of the Middle Ages*, 1851, p. 49.

² *Ancient Practice of Painting*, vol. i, p. 6, 1849.

Staining was an English art. The manuscript goes on to describe at considerable length various processes for making the "coloured waters" with which the stained work was done. One example will show the primitive character of the work. "To make black water. Take a pint of water from under the grindstone on which knives are ground, and place it over the fire, and throw into it a glass of vinegar and ij ounces of galls;¹ then take half an ounce of alum and an ounce of copperas, and boil it until it is reduced by one third and then let it stand for a day."

These notes give an extraordinarily valuable explanation of the manner in which stained cloths were produced, and of what were the differences between them and those which were dyed or painted. An explanation which seems to clear up once for all a very difficult and mysterious problem, all the more mysterious because most of the early records of the London Guild of Painter-Stainers seem to have been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, the earliest document surviving being dated 1623, but by that time staining was obsolete. I owe Mrs. Evelyn Sands many thanks for the loan of Mrs. Merrifield's book.

THE STAINERS IN LONDON

The earliest evidence of the London Stainers as a community appears to be an episode in 1268 recorded in Grafton's *Chronicles* (1569) (Vol. 1, p. 280) in which a variance happened "between the Goldsmiths and Taylors" and with the Taylors took part the Steyners.²

The Letter Books at the Guildhall contain many references to the fraternity and some to stained cloths, but nothing of much interest till the year 1400 when the mistery of Steynours petitioned that they might choose yearly two good men to govern them and to punish those who unlawfully stain cloth for sale.³ In the same year they presented to the Mayor and Aldermen, a petition for certain Ordinances to be approved, but unfortunately they are illegible.⁴

¹ Oak-galls.

² Printed in *History of Painter-Stainer's Company*, Englefield, p. 13.

³ *Letter Book I*, fol. ix.

⁴ *Letter Book H*, fol. cccxxxi.

In 1415 two men were sworn "to rule the mistery well and truly, sparing none for love nor molesting any for hate."¹

In 1431 an incident recorded under the heading "Transmutacio Ric'i Davy ab arte de Peyntours in artem de Steynours," indicates certain difference between the two crafts. Richard Davy of Glostershire, painter, came before the Mayor and Aldermen and showed that whereas he had been admitted into the freedom of the City in the art of Painters (*Pictorum*) in 1415, he had long used and was now using the mistery or art of "Stcynours" as the Master and other of the art of Painters testified. He prayed, therefore, to be admitted into the freedom of the City in the art of "Steynours," which was allowed.²

THE LONDON PAINTERS AND STAINERS UNITE

No organic connection appears to have subsisted between the two crafts until, in 1502 on the day after the Painters' Annual Feast of St. Luke, the "Peyntours and Steynours" appeared before the Lord Mayor and prayed that "the said two craftes might be knyt joyned and unyd to giders as one body and one craft," and be "reputed, taken and called by the name of Payntour Steynors." Also seven articles for their government were authorized, of which the sixth says, "That no one should work stained work or name it such except it be wrought convenably." Persons found guilty of defective staining were to be punished.³

DECAY OF THE STAINERS

Although the united guilds have ever since been known as the Painter-Stainers, the staining portion seems to have rapidly dwindled in numbers and importance. When in 1530 the grant of Arms to the Painters was confirmed, the Stainers were not mentioned,⁴ and without doubt the amalgamation in 1502 indicated a certain need for economy among the members of the Stainers' craft.

¹ *Letter Book I*, fol. clxv b.

² *Letter Book K*, fol. 88.

³ Englefield's *Painter-Stainers*, pp. 47 and 48.

⁴ Englefield, p. 48.

At the end of the sixteenth century they had died out so completely, that though many fine examples of their work remained, it was becoming a mystery as to how they had been produced.

In 1579 Mr. Richard Hackluit of the Middle Temple, gave certain directions to "M. Morgan Hubblethorne, Dier sent into Persia 1579: In Persia there are that staine linen cloth: it is not amisse you learne it if you can: it hath bene an olde trade in England, whereof some excellent clothes yet remaine: but the arte is now lost, and not to be found in the Realme."¹

In John Stow's celebrated *Survey of London*, 1598, he says, "In Trinity Lane, on the west side thereof, is the Painter-stainers' hall, for so of old time were they called, but now that workmanship of staining is departed out of use in England."²

The absolute state of decay which had overtaken the stainer's craft before the end of the sixteenth century, seems to demand some explanation; and this, I think, is to be found in the competition to which it had been subjected from cloths painted at home, and the importation of stained cloths from the Continent, especially from Flanders. Then the change in church services, which followed the Reformation, would stop the demand for stained decorations. The Second Commandment was taken very seriously by Protestants. A great proportion of the stainer's work is found to have been in churches, in the shape of veils and vestments, as well as hangings.

In 1601 the following statement was made in Parliament, "Painting of Cloths is decayed and not an hundred yards of new Painted cloth made in a year here, by reason of so much Painted Flanders pieces brought from thence."³

An obvious advantage of the stained cloths was the absence of stiffness which would allow them to be handled if they were vestments, or hung up temporarily in churches or houses or carried about, without the coloured surface being liable to crack.

On the other hand the painters were working with size and

¹ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. iii, pp. 249-51.

² Stow's *Survey*, Kingsford's edition, vol. ii, pp. 3-4.

³ *Tudor Economic Documents*, vol. i, p. 136.

oil paint, which would be more liable to crack and chip off than those that were stained. But if as seems possible they had found that they could work them thinly by diluting the paint with turpentine or some sort of spirit they may, in that manner, have made their cloths more lasting and convenient. Also their methods would allow them to write upon their cloths mottoes, verses, or passages from Scripture, or scraps of proverbial philosophy, which would be difficult to do by staining without a certain amount of smudginess. This would make them more attractive, and enable the painters to put titles on their cloths and thereby explain the subjects to the onlookers. In the Hall of Sir Rauff Shirley in 1517 was "a pece of imagery of beyondsee work" worth ijs; and in "the Great Parlour" "ij stayned clothes of beyondsee worke old and torne ijs."¹

The casual references to painted cloths, in late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century plays and books, so often refer to their mottoes and admonitory preachments that it seems likely that these were almost always present.

The competition of foreign stained cloth was evidently in existence long before the time of Shakespeare. Dr. H. J. Smit of The Hague in the *History of Trade between England and Holland 1150 to 1485*, mentions that on "December 31, 1384, Walter the son of Walter in his ship the *Mary* brought from Camfer a province of the Netherlands 12 steyndcloths of the value of 13s 4d to the port of London paying 4d customs duty thereon."²

We know that the Dutch and Flemish painters were skilled artists even in the Middle Ages, so they may have grappled successfully with the difficulties of the stainer's craft.

THE STAINERS OF YORK

In the ancient city of York a fourteenth-century manuscript called the Memorandum Book, gives in the year 1387 the Ordinances of "lez Peyntourz, steynours, et goldbetours" but they mostly consist of the regulations for the government

¹ Printed in *Stemmata Shirleyana*.

² *History of the Trade between England and Holland*, vol. i, pt. 1, p. 359.

of the fraternity, its relations with the other bodies in the city, and their contributions to the Pageant at Corpus Christi.¹

In 1422 "lez Payntours, Steynours, Pynners, et Latoners" suggested to the mayor and council that the two plays for which they were responsible should be amalgamated and shortened, and a document in Norman-French shows that it was decreed that from henceforth the painters and stainers should be exempt from producing any plays, but should pay five shillings a year to the pinners and latoners, who undertook them.² It is noteworthy that in the interview at the Guildhall on Ouse Bridge the "payntourcrafte" was represented by four members and the "steynourcrafte" by six.³

The Roll of Freemen in York, published by the Surtees Society, begins in the first year of Edward I and is continuous to modern times. The first stainer mentioned is William le steignour in 1353,⁴ and they are numerous, and a separate craft, till the end of the fifteenth century when a Thomas Gynderscale was described as "payntour alias stenour";⁵ after which the stainars ceased to be enrolled, and were probably absorbed into the Company of Painters.

STAINERS AT NORWICH AND OTHER TOWNS

There is in Norwich a Calendar of the men admitted to the Freedom of the city, from about 1399, but there are several important gaps in the list. The earliest "steynour" mentioned in what remains of the Roll was George Knot, in the 8th of Henry V, 1421, and they continue to be mentioned down to the 3rd of Philip and Mary, 1557.⁶

At Kingston-upon-Hull there were painters, but I have seen no record of any stainers.⁷

At Ipswich in the fifteenth century the Town Hall was enlarged and a Dutch carver was engaged to panel the hall

¹ *York Memorandum Book*, vol. i, pp. 164-166.

² Surtees Society, *Memorandum Book*, vol. ii, pp. 102-4. The "Pynners" were makers of pins, and the Latoners were workers in a kind of brass called "latten."

³ *Memorandum Book*, pp. 102-4.

⁴ Surtees Society, vol. 96, p. 49.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 216.

⁶ *Calendar of Freemen of Norwich*, pp. 82 and 79.

⁷ None are mentioned in *Two Thousand Years of Gild Life*, by Dr. Lambert, which has a full account of the Hull Guilds.

with "estrich board." For the decoration of the wall behind the dais, a painter and stainer named Alfray was employed, and also to adorn the dosser with hangings of the arms of the King, of the borough, and of St. George. In payment for this work they received the freedom of the borough.¹ Before the Court of Petty Pleas. John Fysshman complains versus John Furbusshour that on the 4th Feb. 18th of Edward IV Furbusshour covenanted with Fysshman to paint (*ad pictand*) four linen cloths with divers colours in both roses and flowers well and fittingly (*convenienter*) for two beds by the Feast of the Annunciation B.V.M. next following, the said Furbusshour so managing to deceive him, Fysshman, so very little did he paint and stain (*pinxit et inpect*) and sent back unpainted on the Feast-day named, that he, Fysshman was injured to the extent of 10s."² Coverlets of stained cloths were not unusual. In 1522 Agas Herte of Bury St. Edmunds left "a covering of arrase, & a secunde covylyght, a selor & a testor steynynd wt fflowers, & iij curteyns & the steynynd clothes hanging abowte the plo^r be hynde the hall chemny."³

In the middle of the sixteenth century at Ipswich "the peynters and stayners were sufficiently numerous to found a Guild of St. Luke, having three wardens."⁴ In interludes and plays stained cloths were often used for backcloths and scenery. At Norwich in 1561 "Pd for staynyng certayn clothes for the interlude. xijd" occurs.⁵

Stained cloths are fairly often mentioned in early wills and inventories and sometimes occur in old literature, but much less frequently than painted cloths. In 1493 Thomas Clarell citizen and grocer of London bequeathed to the church of Rotherham "my clothe of Arras of the passyon of our Lord, to hang afore the rodelofte ther as long as hit will endure, and my steyned clothe of the batell by twene the lord Skallys and the Bastard, to pray for the sowles aforesaide," also "a vestment of whight damaske with my armes upon hit and the

¹ Ipswich Corporation Records, Edward IV to Richard III, printed in *East Anglican Daily Times*, by V. B. Redstone.

² Ib., Roll IX, 18-19, Edward IV. Extracted by V. B. Redstone.

³ Camden Society, *Bury Wills*.

⁴ V. B. Redstone, F.S.A., Ipswich, *The Ancient House*, p. 75.

⁵ *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 275.

grocers armys apoune the same.”¹ In 1449 Bishop Reginald Pecock, in his work *The Represser of over much blaming of the Clergy*, says: “For whi in this maner of colourid speche we seien this ymage is Seint Peter . . . and in this steyned clooth rideth Hector of Troie: and here in this steyned clooth King Herri leith a sege to Harflew.”²

Besides wall hangings, bed coverlets, bed curtains and testers were often made of stained work. In the inventory of Philip Ballard, Dean of Worcester, dated November 1557 is in the parlor “yowlo and redde hangyngs of buckeram with a border of Abraham xij^s iiijd^d. In the chambre over the buttre, “a testorne with a doble fringe with a cloth at the hed of stayned damask work iijs the hangynge of stayned damaske worke iij^s iiijd^d. In the myddle chambre hangyns of stayned damaske worke with a border of the historye of the passion xij^s iiijd^d. In the Prior’s Lodgings at Worcester, Hangyngs of redde and grene with a border of the historie of the tower of babilon xx^s.” At Finchale Priory, on the bank of the River Wear three miles from Durham, there was in 1411 a coverlet for a bed, (j coopertorium steyned).³ In 1463 John Baret of Bury left to Jone his niece “my steynd cloth wt vij agys and a competent bed.”⁴

In 1413 the Account Rolls of Durham Abbey record an item for painting on a table (that is, a picture) an image of St. John the Evangelist in the Infirmary Chapel and for painting a cupboard with St. Andrew at a cost of 2od. and in painting the Chapel of the Infirmary, together with two stained cloths bought for the said Chapel 5s. and for painting an image of St. Cuthbert 2od. In 1454 the same Rolls show one stained cloth for ornamenting the walls of the New Chamber, having in the middle an eagle and “In the beginning was the Word.”⁵

¹ *North Country Wills*, vol. ii, p. 63.

² *Pecock Represser*, II, xviii, 258.

³ *Priory of Finchale*, p. clv.

⁴ Camden Society, *Bury Wills*, p. 33. In 1385 Philip the Bold ordered a piece of tapestry from Arras representing the Seven Ages of Man. Accounts of the House of Burgundy quoted in A. de Champeaux’s *Tapestry*.

⁵ It. j pannus steynd longus et largus pro ornato murorum, habens in medio unam aquilam et inscript. *In principio erat verbum*.—Surtees Society, vol. ix, p. 149.

In an inventory of 1464 of St. Mary's, Warwick, were "It. iij peeces of steyend cloth i of the birthe of our lady, the second of saint Appolyne and the thirdde of our ladye write afore the ffili Xpe Dei tu miserere mei and an holy lambe about that."

In Clodshale's Chantry in the parish church at Birmingham, an Inventory taken in 1424 shows "an Auter cloth steyne prec xvjd."¹

In 1528 the Inventory of Master Wm. Melton Chancellor of York shows that he had in his own chamber "An olde hangynge wth flours xijd. Two pecces of staned worke wth Saint John xvjd." In another house he had "Three olde peces of roten paynted clothes iiijd."

In 1452 the inventory of Canon Wm. Duffield mentions in his domestic chapel two costers of linen cloth, stained with images of St. John the Evangelist and Saint John of Beverley, they were valued at xijs, and three others at xvs. stained with angels, and ij alter-cloths stained with images of the Trinity and the Blessed Mary, valued at ijs. viijd. and vs. for ij altar cloths, stained with the Trinity, etc.²

In 1479 Joan Candell left to Friar John Farleton "xs, wt a halling of white stened" and to Christian Forman, "a halling of white stevened with viij warkes of mercy" also "a bedd of murray stened with I.H.S."³

Another instance of stained cloths in churches shows various uses for them. In 1503 an inventory at St. Laurence Church Reading, has: "ij stayneyd clothis wt ryddeles to the same and a covering for the halpace over the hy awlt' stayned wt red damaske warke⁴ and an ymage of Seynt Laurence in the mydde. A cloth staynd wt the byrthe of or Lorde for the fonte and a noy' cloth for the same of lynnyn wt panys white and blew. An aut clothe stayneyd wt an ymage of our lady

¹ Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, p. 636, 1745 edition.

² De xijs de pret. ij costers panni linei, steyynd cum ymaginibus Sanctorum Johannis Evangelistae et Sancti Johannis Beverlaci. De xvs de pret. iij costers steyynd cum angels. De ijs viijd de pret. ij auter clothes stened cum ymaginibus Trinitatis et Beatae Mariae. De vs de pret. ij alter clothes de panno, stened cum Trinitate et Salutatione Angelica, et ij curtyns cum angelis.—Surtees Society, *Testa. Ebor.*, vol. 45, p. 135.

³ Surtees Society, ib., vol. 45, p. 345.

⁴ That is, stained in imitation of red damask.

of Pyte and ij angels, and another wt the sepulcre, and ij angells for the hy awlt' in lent. A nother awt' clothe staynyd wt an ymage of or lady onely. A nother aut' clothe staynyd wt or lady, Seynt Gregory, Pyte, and Seynt Anne. An aut' cloth stayned of thassumpcion of or lady, seynt Anne and seynt Margaret."¹

The accounts of the Guild of the Holy Cross, at Stratford, were arranged and repaired in 1886 by Mr. W. J. Hardy, F.S.A., and his brief descriptions and abstracts from some of the rolls that still exist were printed in the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*. Under 1471 is the entry "20s pro tribus mappis steyned to hang in the hall of the Guild." The author of *Topographical Notes: Stratford-on-Avon* has taken this to mean that the fraternity had purchased three maps, and goes on to say, "It will be remembered that Christopher Columbus was at this time about 36 years of age, and considerable interest was taken in geography. These three maps cost the considerable sum in those days of 20s. and no doubt helped to educate the good traders of Stratford." But the word "mappis" means *cloths*, not maps: and what the entry records is that three stained cloths had been bought to decorate the Guild Hall. There is unfortunately nothing to indicate what were the subjects depicted on these hangings. The words of the document are "et de xxs solutis pro tribus mappis steyned, ad pendendum in aula Gilde." Therefore we must not picture to ourselves the predecessors of John Shakespeare studying geography on the stained hangings of the Guildhall and following the routes of Christopher Columbus across to the New World. The only chance of getting any idea of the subjects of these cloths is to study the descriptions, however brief, of the stained cloths which happen to have been recorded in other documents in greater detail.

In the same Guild Accounts in 1501 is an item "2 ells of linen cloth 17d, and for staynyng the said cloth 2s." It seems therefore that there was a stainer in Stratford at that date.

Stained cloths throughout the sixteenth century were becoming much fewer, and except in churches are rarely

¹ Dr. J. C. Cox's *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 132. Dr. Cox falls into the usual error by calling the above "stained, i.e. painted, cloths."

recorded. In the account made by the wardens of Long Melford in Suffolk in 1529 are, "A cloth of Adam and Eve to draw before the High Altar in time of Lent, called the Veil. At Jesus Altar a cloth for Lent painted about with Whips and Angels. At St. Ann's Altar a stained altar cloth for every day. At the said altar two clothes stained with flowers. At St. Edmund's Altar was a painted cloth of St. Michael and Our Lady. Three long cloths hanging before the Rood Loft stained or painted with the dawnce of Powlis."¹

It is noteworthy that the churchwardens could distinguish between the cloths that were painted and those that were stained, except in the case of the long cloth of the *Dance of Paul's*, which was the same subject as Holbein's *Dance of Death*, and that one seems to have puzzled them.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries vestments were still sometimes stained. In the chantry of St. Anne at York was a red stained chasuble, with orfreys (that is a row of borders at the edges) of images stained. ("j chesible dc rubes steyned, cum orfrays de ymaginibus steyned.")

Strips of saints for borders to hangings could be bought ready stained. William More, Prior of Worcester, noted in his diary in 1531 "payd for panes of seynts with steyned clothes, pawpers [i.e. papers], &c for ye hangyng of chambers. iis."² And again for iiiij steyned panes of cloth 6s od."³ And later still "for iiiij panes of steynd clothes price 7s. 6d."⁴

The best and fullest descriptions of subjects that were stained upon cloths, are to be found in a manuscript at the British Museum, which is a list, made in 1542, of paintings and tapestry belonging to Henry VIII. The tapestry list has been printed in a book on Tapestry by W. G. Thompson, but I believe that the list of paintings and stained cloths has never been printed. These have the heading:

In charge of Sir A. Deny.⁵

- Item Stayned clothe wt the picture of Charles themperor.
- Item A Stayned clothe wt the picture of the prince of orrenge.

¹ Parker's *History of Long Melford*.

² Ib., p. 102.

³ Sir Anthony Denny was Treasurer to Henry VIII.

⁴ Prior More's *Journal*, p. 85.

⁴ Ib., p. 193.

- Item a stayned clothe wt the picture of men and women sitting at a banquet and deathe commynge in makeing them all afraide and one standyng wt a sworde to kepe hym out of the dore.
- Item a stayned clothe wt sondrye men and women syttinge at a banquette in a woode and a crymson clothe hanged betwixte the croches of twooe trees to shadowe them and a women on horsebacke with footeman run(n)ynge by her.
- Item a stayned clothe of Phebus riding in his carte in the ayre wt thhistorye of hym.
- Item a stayned clothe wt thhistorye of Judithe.
- Item a stayned clothe wt the picture of Solymame the turke beinge his whole stature.
- Item Thhistorye of Kynge Asa of the breakinge and castinge downe of the aulters wt the Idolles stayned uppon tike.
- Item a little square Table wt the picture of or Lorde crowned wt thorne his arms bounde stayned uppon clothe.
- Item Another Table wt the whole stature of the Kynges Maiestie stayned uppon clothe withe a curteyne of green sarconette.
- Item A table wt the name of Jhesus and the iij Evangelistes stayned uppon single sarcconette.
- Item A table wt the picture of John Frederike Duke of Saxon stayned uppon lynnен clothe beinge his whole stature.
- Item a table wth thhistorye of Orpheus with sondrye strange beastes and monsters stayned uppon clothe.¹

These lists having been made, there can be no doubt that the cloths were *stayned* because they are along with three others which are stated to have been painted. The first two in the list were simply head and shoulder or half-length portraits, as the Grand Turk "Solymame" is described as "beinge his whole stature."

The "stayned cloth of Phebus" also had the history of him, and three of the others are described as being histories. These I take to have been pictures such as we see in Elizabethan Bibles, in which there is one large figure and also several others of the same man, showing some of the chief incidents in his career.

¹ Harl. MSS. 1419a, fol. 131d.

Chapter VI

Painters and Painted Cloths

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that he only mentions them once, the more primitive kind of hangings known as “stained cloths” must have been known to Shakespeare, because though they had ceased to be made in the England of his day, they were still in use, either imported or surviving from past times, and were a part of the background before which the upper and middle-class members of Elizabethan society lived and moved. They would seem, however, to have become practically negligible in numbers compared to the *painted* cloths. Allusions to these are (except in the northern counties) so frequent in the time of Elizabeth and James that the use of them must have been very widespread, yet in Stratford and the villages round about they were more numerous still.

For this fashion of painted wall-hangings which prevailed in the Stratford district, there must have been some reason or reasons, and I think one of these is to be found in the fact that the town was a long way from the coast. Wainscot was constantly being imported from the “Eastland” countries, especially those on the Baltic; and in the North of England documents one finds much evidence that foreign wainscot abounded there. No part of the northern counties lies distant from the sea, and in them one meets with such items as the following from the will dated 1525, of John Henryson of Kynges’ town upon Hull. “I gif to William Heryson the carver, at the next comyng of the hulkes oute of Danske, a c wayne scottes.”¹

Painted cloths are rarely mentioned and when they occur

¹ That is, one hundred wainscots.—Surtees Society, vol. 79. p. 212.

are generally in the churches. The wainscots recorded in these wills were not what we mean by "wainscot" but were thick slabs of oak, the raw material of panelling, furniture, etc. The will of Guye Malyerd who was a mercer and merchant and lived at Beverley, says, "To the kyrkwerk of oure Lady aforesaide xxx squared trees and half c waynescotes, to the reparaciones of the stalles of the said chirch. To the Blak Freers of Beverley xx waynescottes or els xs, for doyng of a trentall."¹ Wainscots occur in the stocks of merchants, with "Danske Iron," and were valuable even on the coast, but when carried across England would be still dearer. Harrison writing in 1580, of the walls of rooms, says, "The wals of our houses on the inner sides in like sort be either hanged with tapisterie, arras worke, or painted cloths, wherin either diuerse histories, or hearbes, beasts, knots, and such like are stained, or else they are seeded² with oke of our owne or wainescot brought hither out of the east countries, whereby the roomes are not a little commended, made warme and much more close than otherwise they would be."³

Oak was plentiful in Warwickshire, and there was a certain amount of oak panelling in Stratford, but it was a luxury and was reckoned with the portable possessions of the owner. The town is extremely fortunate in possessing a great number of priceless town records, and among them and also in the Worcester Probate Registry,⁴ there is preserved a great quantity of domestic inventories, wills and corporation accounts, especially of Elizabethan and later dates, from which one can get an idea of the houses, furniture and interior arrangements of these times, and one of the most striking facts that a study of them discloses is, that in Shakespeare's time nearly every house in the town and neighbourhood had its rooms hung with painted cloths. They are a feature of most recorded households. There is hardly a dwelling that did not contain them. Even Thomas Ballamy, who was a "laborer," had in 1597 "paynted cloths" to the value of twelve

¹ That is doing thirty masses for his soul.

² i.e. panelled.

³ Harrison's *Description of England*, 1577-87, Furnivall, Part I, p. 235.

⁴ Stratford on Avon being then in that diocese. Those relating to Warwickshire are now at Birmingham.

pence. True, they were old ones, but Robert Stevens who also was a "laborer" had "paynted clothes in the hall" and more "payneted clothes in his bed-chamber."

Painted cloths were generally, but not always, used by those who could not afford the much more costly woven tapestries, or the "Dornix" or "green and red say" which one finds were often employed for wall and bed-hangings in Elizabethan times or earlier. But great and wealthy people also valued them. The great Chancellor Sir Thomas More had designed painted cloths and the great Archbishop William Wareham left to his nephew (in his long Latin will dated 1530), "All my cloths hanging in my chamber in which I sleep at Knoll, in which are painted figures of Jesus Christ, Saint John the Baptist and other apostles, which I bought of Sir Arthur Darcy, also all my cloths hanging in another chamber adjacent to my said chamber, in which are the figures of hunters, bears, boars, and stags (ymagines venatorum, ursorum, aprorum et cervorum)."¹

Unfortunately, in London, the records of the craft-guild which still survives under the name of the Painter-Stainers Company only begin in 1623, most of the earlier ones having been burnt in the Great Fire of 1666; and though three Histories of the Company have been written, the last in quite recent times, there is hardly anything as to the painting of cloths to be gleaned from them. In *The Livery Companies of the City of London*, by W. C. Hazlitt, are interesting facts concerning the later history of the Painter-Stainers but nothing as to their artistic wall-hanging activities.

THE PAINTERS OF LONDON

The earliest known record of the Painters' fraternity is a Norman-French document of 1283 in the Guildhall of London,² a translation of which is given in the *History of the Painter-Stainers Company of London* by W. A. D. Englefield, but though it consists of a number of lengthy Ordinances, it contains but little detail as to the actual work of the members, and none at all as to painted cloths.

¹ Camden Society, *Wills from Doctors' Commons*, 1862, p. 23.

² Liber Horn, fol. 341b.

There are many entries in the Liberate Rolls in the reign of Henry III, in which the King orders the wainscoting of chambers, halls and other buildings in castles and manor-houses, to be painted with the figures of saints, histories, etc.¹ It follows, therefore, that many members of this craft were quite capable of producing good painted cloths.

There is a Latin document at the Guildhall dated the twelfth year of Edward I (1284) when Nicholas Bacun, painter, acknowledged that he was bound to the City Chamberlain "in the sum of 20 shillings for cinople, vermillion, and canvas, varnish and verdigris."²

In Dr. R. R. Sharpe's *Calendar of the Letter-books of the Guildhall*, among the "names of those elected and sworn in divers Misteries of London, for the government and instruction of the same in 1328, are Robert Davy, Henry de Denecoumbe, William de Parkele & Richard de Stokwell who were elected to govern the Guild of Painters.³ In the previous year 1327 Henry de Denecombe was chosen with Geoffrey le Purtreour to represent the guild of Painters at a conference which had been ordained to arrange terms for peace in a quarrel between the Saddlers of London on the one part and the Joiners, Lorimers⁴ in iron, Lorimers in copper and the Painters on the other.⁵ Judging by his name "Geoffrey the Portrayer" was a painter of pictures, and no doubt of painted cloths also. But when Shakespeare was born the cloths of the Painters had to a great extent superseded the ancient hangings made by the Stainers who had, as already stated, an independent craft-guild in London until quite the end of the fifteenth century. In 1465 the Stainers' Company are given as contributing fourteen men to the City Watch, but in the same list the Painters' Company are mentioned as furnishing twenty men. It will be remembered that in 1502 the Stainers of London had petitioned the Lord Mayor to allow them to join the Painters and that the two Companies were then united.

¹ Hudson Turner, *Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages*, vol. i, chap. v, p. 181.

² *Letter-book A*, fol. xxxix. Printed by Riley.

³ *Letter-book E*, p. 234.

⁴ Lorimers were makers of bits for horses.

⁵ Riley's *Memorials of London*, p. 156.

A Charter was obtained in July 1581, and the year after a Book of Ordinances was approved containing thirty-seven articles, of which the twelfth says "that any person changing, spoiling, or making away with the cloth of another, left with him for painting or staining,¹ should make recompense to the injured party and suffer punishment." Article 14 enacted that nobody might "devise any kind of work . . . or make any kind of painted cloth . . . with patterns, print, stencil, or otherwise" for sale by other persons, unless it was previously examined and marked.

In London the Painter-Stainers Company were repeatedly engaged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in quarrelling with the Plasterers, and in the course of the dispute it was alleged that "The Painters and Staynors were two Companies, the one for painting with colours in oil and size upon timber, stone, iron and such like, and the Staynors for cloth silk and such like."²

In 1601 there was an attempt made by the Painters' Company to stop the encroachments of the Plasterers. It was stated in a debate in the House of Commons (in support of a Bill brought in by the Painters) that "the Plasterers have been suffered to lay Alchouse Colours as red Lead and Oaker with such like, and now intrude themselves to all Colours; thus they take not only their own work but Painting also, and leave nothing to do for the Painter. Painters and Stainers were two several Companies in King Edward the Third's time; one for Painting of Posts and all Timber-work, and the other for Staining and Painting of Cloth of great continuance. The two several Co's were joined both into one by their own consents and the consents of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, in the 19th year of King Edward the 4th. The Painters had Orders allowed them for the use of Oyl and Colours, especially named in King Henry the Fourth's time. . . . Painters cannot work without

¹ There is no probability that staining was then being carried on, but the "Book" being a legal document, and the Company's name being the "Free-men of the Art or Mystery of Painters, commonly called Painter Stainers," the word was frequently put in documents long after the craft itself had died out.

² Lansdowne MSS. quoted in Englefield's *History of Painter-Stainers' Company*.

Colours, their only mixture being Oyl and Size, which the Plaisterers do now usurp and intrude into. Painters have her Majesties Letters Patents dated the twenty fourth of Elizabeth forbidding any Artificer the use of Colours and Oyl or Size, after the manner of Painting but only such as have been or shall be Apprentice, namely with a Painter seven years at the least. . . . One man will lay and paint more Colours in a day than ten men can grind which grinding of colours shall be the relief of two or three hundred poor men that cannot attain Workmanship. . . . Besides, Painting of Cloths is decayed, and not an hundred yards of new Painted Cloth made in a Year here, by reason of so much Painted Flanders pieces brought from thence; so as the Painters have nothing to live, on, but laying of Oyl Colours on Posts, Windows etc. . . . These walls thus curiously painted in former Ages, the Arms so artificially drawn, the Imagery so perfectly done, do witness our Forefathers care in cherishing this art of Painting, etc”¹

At that time the Palace of Westminster had a great amount of its interior walls painted, and it seems probable that the above speech was made in the presence of some of these wonderful and ancient paintings, to which the speaker drew the attention of the House.²

Stow says: “the Company of *Painters* having the addition of *Painters Stainers* are of high antiquity; yet were they not incorporated till 1580, by Queen Elizabeth. Their arms quarterly in the first azure, a cheuron between 3 heads, erected, or, in the second argent 3. Escuchins azure, the third as the second, the fourth as the first.”³ It appears, however, that as early as 1486 the Painter’s Company were granted a coat of arms by Sir T. Holme, Clarenceux King of Arms, as follows: “The Feld asure, a chevron between thre fenyx hedes rased, golde membred goules. The Creste upon an helme a finyx in his proper nature and coloures set with a wrethe gold and goules; the mantell asure furred with ermyne.”⁴ In this there was no

¹ Printed in *Tudor Economic Documents*, vol. i, p. 136.

² Especially the vast room called the Painted Chamber—*Palace of Westminster*, vol. v, p. II.

³ Stow’s *Survey of London*, p. 44.

⁴ Englefield’s *Painter-Stainers’ Company*, p. 42. It would be interesting to know what the natural colours of a phoenix were like!

quartering. When in 1502 the crafts of the Peynters and the Steyners presented a joint petition to the Lord Mayor asking that they might be one craft, there were granted joint Ordinances in which there are seven articles, but none that mentioned painted cloths. In the "Composition" of the Goldsmiths, etc., of Kingston-upon-Hull, 1598,¹ a distinction is made between the "Painter, picture-drawer, or armes painter," none of whom were to be in their Company unless they had been made free burgesses of the town.

THE PAINTERS OF YORK AND OTHER TOWNS

The earliest mention of a painter in the Roll of the Freemen of York is "Johannes de Holme pictor," in 1312. In the list of Norwich Freemen, "John de Bradwelle, Peyntour," is the first recorded in 1375. In 1444 "the Crafte of Cardemakers, Sadelers, Masons & peyntors of the Cite of Coventre" united to support the Pageant of the Card-makers.² In 1527 it was enacted "that all carvers within this Cite frome hensfurth shal-be associat with the Craft of peyntours."³ These two crafts are mentioned together in 1531,⁴ and the Peynters again in 1532.⁵ In the town of Shrewsbury the Painters were members of a guild called The Combrethren of Saddlers, Painters, etc., and some of their records exist but are too late to be of use for the present subject.⁶

In the Stratford-on-Avon Guild Accounts, 1417, is the following: "Payments for cleaning the images of the High Cross, the Blessed Mary, and St. John the Baptist, in the rood-loft (solar) of the Holy Cross, and for cleaning the rood-loft; for red lead and other colours, gold and oil, for painting the said images and rood-loft, with the payment to the painter; for 'ijies Judas de novo fact'; for linen cloth for making 'vestis' hanging before the High Cross in the time of Lent etc."⁷

¹ Lambert's *Two Thousand Years of Gild Life*, p. 265.

² *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 205. The Cardmakers were Wire-drawers.

³ Ib., p. 693.

⁴ Ib., p. 709.

⁵ Ib., p. 712.

⁶ *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*.

⁷ Page II.

A PAINTER'S WILL

In the Roll of York Freemen the fourth painter mentioned is John de Blythe¹ in 1335. He was probably the father of Henry de Blythe Citizen and Painter of York in 1365 whose long Latin will² is printed in the earliest volume of *Testamenta Eboracensia*. He seems to have been a person of some distinction. He directs that his body shall be buried in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter at York "infra locum processionis" and leaves xx*s* to the fabric, but if that amount is considered not enough he is to be buried in the church of the Friars of the Order of Saint Augustine, and the brethren to have xii*s* iiijd (13*s*. 4*d*.). He also leaves money and his best robe to his parish church and to the vicar for lights around his corpse v*s* iiijd (6*s*. 5*d*.) and 4 pounds of wax. He also leaves money for distribution to the poor and for masses on the day of his burial. He ordains that one honest chaplain for three years, or three chaplains for one year, shall celebrate for his soul and those of his first wife, his father, mother, etc. Also he leaves money to the following monasteries and institutions: To the Hospital near the Fosse bridge, and to the four Orders of Mendicant Friars. To Agnes Clynt sister of the Hospital of St. Leonard, and to the other sisters of the said Hospital; to the poor in the Hospital Infirmary, and the Four Houses of Lepers, and the poor in the Hospital of the Ouse Bridge. To Muriel who was wife to Henry of Langley, to the brethren and sisters who are needy in the Hospital of Saint Nicholas of Wallegate York. To his parish Chaplain and his parish clerk and to the two enclosed Anchorites of York equally divided. To Beatrice of Lee his niece he left one of his mazers "(unum ciphum de murro cum uno founce), to William of Monkton chaplain 3*s* & 4*d*. I leave to Roger of Blythe my brother x*s*, or the same value in goods; to Beatrice wife to the same Roger 6 silver spoons: to William Stirap painter x*s* and a bed sufficient for his state and one brass pot of two or three gallons and one posnet, to Alice Hascule my servant x*ld* to Elisabet Filer one bed worth 6*s* & 8*d*. To John the heir

¹ Johannes de Blithe, payntour, p. 31.

² *Testamentum Henrici de Blythe Pictoris Ebor.*, p. 74.

to Robert Parkour one basin and a laver to Robert Sadleyr my best cloak and a cloth with napkins and 3/4, or the same value in money. To Matilda my wife of the part of my goods which belong to me ten pounds. To Godeskalco armourer for his labor if he will undertake the administration with my other executors xijs, iiijs. I wish that all clothing of my body be distributed among poor friends and others indigent where there is the greatest necessity. I leave to Thomas son of my brother Roger, my best mazer (*meliorem cipum de murro, vocatum knopmazer*) and six silver spoons, to be kept by the said Thomas for the whole of his life, and after the decease of the same Thomas I wish that the aforesaid mazer remain to the nearest heir of the same Thomas. I leave to Robert son to John Stircp and his brother at school 6/8. I leave to Beatrice, wife to my brother Roger, one hanging laver. Item I leave to Emma wife to Robert Parker of Carleton, one mazer or one white 'founce.' Item I leave to Sir William de Disseford, chaplain xjid. Item to Matilda of Thornton xijd. Item to Walter Sadler of Petergate xijd."

He leaves all the residue of his goods for masses and other pious works for his soul and the souls of his two wives, and those of all his benefactors.

He leaves Matilda his wife the principal executor and Roger his brother and Godskalkum Armourer, with Sir John de Broddesworth supervisor. This will shows that, even in the fourteenth century, a painter was sometimes a man of importance, and must have had considerable ability. Blyth is the name of a place in Northumberland, so he was an Englishman, not a foreigner.

THE SUBJECTS OF PAINTED CLOTHS

Unfortunately the Stratford inventories do not say anything as to the subjects that were depicted on the cloth hangings which were so numerous in the district, but it is possible nevertheless to ascertain indirectly a great deal concerning them.

It is clear that as to subject they were often the same as the tapestries of wool and silk, and the paintings that were some-

times applied direct to the walls. Just as the makers and designers of pewter modelled their wares on the current fashion of the more valuable silver and silver-gilt, so the painters of cloths followed the designs used in the above more costly fabrics. There were certain favourite subjects that were often employed, as may be inferred from some of the speeches of Shakespeare's characters. For example, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Costard says to Nathaniel, "O, Sir! You have overthrown Alisander the conqueror! You will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this."¹ Whitlocke's *Zootomia* says, "That Alexander was a soul-dier, painted cloths will confess. The painter dareth not leave him out of the Nine Worthies," which show that the group of the Nine Worthies was one of the stock subjects for the Painters, as it was also for the players of interludes, and the weavers of tapestries. "Thou art as valourous as Hector of Troy," says Doll Tearsheet to Falstaff, "worth five of Agamemnon, and ten times better than the Nine Worthies."²

JOHN SHAKESPEARE HAD PAINTED CLOTHS

In the absence of an inventory of his effects, we cannot tell with great exactness what there was of furniture or domestic implements in John Shakespeare's house, but we can be quite sure that he had painted cloths, and also we can make some likely guesses at their subjects.

I have already stated that the halls and manor-houses, the churches, farm-houses, and even tenements of the whole district were furnished with abundance of hangings—in the great houses with tapestry, but in all of them with painted cloth—and it may with confidence be assumed that John Shakespeare's house had no lack of such trappings. Cloths, sometimes stained but generally painted, were cheap; and in Stratford the houses being built of "half-timber" needed them to counteract the draughts that would have found their way through the chinks in the walls.

Also we have the testimony of Estienne Perlin, a French

¹ Act V, Scene 2.

² Second part, *King Henry IV*, Act II, Sc. 4.

student from Paris, who visited England in 1558, that wherever he went in this country he found them in nearly every house. He says: "The English make much use of tapestries of painted cloths¹ which are very well executed, in some there are magnificent crowned roses, or there are *fleurs de lis* and lions, for there are few houses you could enter without finding these *tapisseries*."²

Earlier in these pages we have recorded a number of the most popular scenes and incidents that the artists of those days undertook to render pictorially, but there were others of which the subjects are only now and then met with.

Andrew Borde, the sixteenth-century doctor of medicine, warns his readers "that no paynted clothes nor paynted wallys" should be in the chamber or house that a madman is in "for suche thynges maketh them ful of fantasyes."³

Devils as well as saints were often depicted on cloths. "Friar Rush," his adventures, evil tricks, and various disguises were popular subjects. He was supposed to be one of Satan's choicest spirits, and able to assume different shapes. As a beautiful woman he contrived to enter a monastery (or perhaps took that disguise after he had got in) and caused there considerable dissension. In the play called *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*, by "Mr. S., Mr. of Art," Hodge the Gammer's man describes to her a great black devil that he professes to have seen another man "call up," though being scared he had fled before it appeared, and she asks, "But Hodge, had he no hornes to pushe," whereon he replies, "As long as your two armes, saw ye neuer Fryer Rushe Painted on a cloth, with a side long cowestayle: And crooked clouen feete & many a hoked nayle? For al the world (if I shuld iudge) should recken him his brother. Loke euen what face Frier Rush had, the deuill had such another."⁴

¹ Les Anglois se servent fort des tapisseries des toiles pincées, qui sont bien faictes ausquelles y a force magnifiques roses couronnées, ou il y a des fleurs de Liz and Lions, car en peu de maison vous pouves entrer que vous ne trouvies ces tapisseries.

² One has to remember that the French give the word "tapisseries" to various woven fabrics, and even to upholstery and needlework, as well as to what we call tapestry.

³ Borde's *Regiment of Health*.

⁴ Page 34, *Gammer Gurton's Nedle*, 1920 reprint, edited by H. F. B. Brett-Smith. The author is thought to have been Bishop Still of Bath and Wells.

In "A Dialogue bothe pleasaunte and piettiful," William Bulleyn in 1564, described with much detail the painted cloths which were in an inn at Barnet. A citizen of London and his wife are fleeing from the plague. The great length of the descriptions makes it impossible to quote more than one or two of them. The inscriptions are all in Latin. The citizen says, "This is a comely parlour . . . the windows are well glased and faire clothes with many wise saiynges painted vpon them." As to one cloth the wife asks, "What nomber of men in harnesse¹ are these. Some sleapyng & many of theim semeth to goe wisperyng together & behind them there appereth other men putting forth their heddes out of corners wearyng no harnesse. "*Civis.*" These are not only the Constables with the watchmen in London but also almoste through this realme, most falsely abusyng the tyme, commyng verie late to the watche, sitting down in some common place of watchyng, wherein some falleth on slepe by the reason of labour or much drinkyng before or els nature requireth rest in the night. Thesc fellowes thinke euery hower a thousande untill thei goe home, home, home euery man to bed. God night, God night, God sauе the Queene! saieth the constables, farewell neighbours. Eftesones after their departyng creepeth forthe the wilde roge & his fellowes, hauyng two or three other harlottes for their toune, with picklockes, hande-sawes long Hookes, ladders &c to break into houses, robbe, murther, steale & doe all mischief in the houses of true men, vtterly vndoing honest people to maintain their harlottes; great hoses, lined clokes, long daggers, & feathers, these muste be paid for. This cometh for want of punishment by the daie, & idle watche in the night. God graunt that some of the watche be not scoutes to the theues. Yes, . . . If this watche bee not better looked vnto, good wife, in euery place in this realme & all the night long searchyng euery suspected corner, no man shall be able to kepe a penie, no, scant his owne life in a while, For thei that dare attempt such matters in the citie of London, what will they doe in houses smally garded or by the high waie?"

The last subject of these painted cloths is the subjoined.

Vxor. "Jesus, Jesus! good husband, but one question & then

¹ That is, armour.

to dinner. What are all these two & two in a table? Oh, it is trim!"

Civis. "These are old frendes; it is well handled, & worke-manly. Willyam Boswell in Paternoster rowe painted them. Here is Christ & Sathan, Saint Peter & Syman Magus, Paule & Alexander the Copersmith, Trace & Becket, Martin Luther and the Pope, Ecolampadius & Fisher, Sir Thomas Mbore & Jhon Frith, bishop Cranmer and bishop Gardiner, Boner wepyng Bartlet grene breche, Galen & Gregory, Wisedom Auicen & George Salthous, Salomon & Will Sommer, The Cocke & the Lyon, the Wolfe & the Lambe."

It has often been supposed that the plays of Shakespeare, at the time when they were first produced, were performed in front of a plain background, entirely without the aid of what we call scenery. But when tapestry and painted cloths abounded wherever the players went, in the Great Chambers, the Great Halls of manor-houses, or the Guild halls of towns, they would never lack the choice of more or less suitable hangings for backgrounds. All sorts were available and could be easily unhooked, and rearranged.

In the induction to *Cynthia's Revels*, a play by Ben Jonson, before the performance begins a boy actor offers to fetch a stool for a sober "garter-gathered squire," but gets the reply, "Away, wag; what, wouldst thou make an implement of me? 'Slid, the boy takes me for a piece of perspective, I hold my life, or some silk curtain come to hang the stage here! Sir crack, I am none of your fresh pictures that use to beautify the decayed dead arras in a public theatre."

A citizen and his wife, having been invited to sit on the stage, are making ignorant comments on the play.¹ At the end of a scene when the actors have left, the wife says to her husband. "Now, sweet lamb, what story is that painted upon the cloth? the Confutation of St. Paul." *Cit.* "No, lamb, that's Ralph (pronounced Rafe) and Lucrece." *Wife.* "Ralph & Lucrece. Which Ralph? our Ralph?" *Cit.* "No, mouse; that was a Tartarian," meaning, of course, Tarquin.

¹ Printed in *Wm. Shakespeare, His Family and Friends*, by C. I. Elton, p. 467.

PAINTED CLOTHS IN SHAKESPEARE

In *As You Like It*, Orlando has been bandying words and phrases with the melancholy Jacques, who says, "You are full of pretty answers. Have you not been acquainted with goldsmiths' wives, and conned them out of rings?" To which Orlando rejoins, "Not so; but I answer you right painted cloth; from whence you have studied your questions."

The charge of having borrowed his witty repartees from the sentimental couplets of "posy-rings" (that is, poesy-rings which had verses engraved round the inner sides) was parried by Orlando's insinuation that his discourses had been enriched by a study of the inscriptions on painted cloths, which however wise and true they may have been are not likely to have exhibited much originality and had probably become hackneyed by repetition.

One recalls also Tarquin's sneer in *The Rape of Lucrece*, "Who fears a sentence or an old man's saw, Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe."¹ Also the suggestive exclamation of Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida*, "Good traders in the flesh, set this in your painted cloths."²

Falstaff, describing his pressed soldiers, says they are "slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs licked his sores"; which takes for granted that his hearers were familiar with cloths on which the parable of Dives and Lazarus was depicted.

The audience must have rocked with laughter as they heard Falstaff trying to convince Mistress Quickly (when she was lamenting the necessity for pawning her silver vessels and the tapestry of her dining-chambers in order to lend him more money) that painted cloths were much more desirable than tapestry; and from his impatient interruptions one can get the names of three of the usual subjects. "Glasses, glasses is the only drinking, and for thy walls a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in Water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and these fly-bitten tapestries."³

¹ Verse 35.

² *Henry IV, Part II, Act II, Sc. 1.*

³ Act V, Sc. 10.

"THE PRETTY SLIGHT DROLLERY"

It has been supposed by some that in this list he was thinking of painted walls, but this is improbable, as he is evidently suggesting a change that could be easily and rapidly carried out. The walls where tapestry hung were left rough, and a painter would require time to execute the subjects that Falstaff had suggested, if they were to be painted on a wall. It is obvious that he is talking of things that could be bought ready to use, like the glasses, and the "German hunting in water-work" must have been an imported "stained cloth."

The "pretty slight drollery" was the sort of fanciful design with groups of grotesque figures which more or less grew out of foliage, or sometimes animal forms. It was considered to be very amusing in the Middle Ages, and there are many remains of such work, especially in church carvings, from misericords to gargoyle.

The Prior of Worcester in 1531 was redecorating one of his manor-houses, and notes in his diary "bowht at london the peynted clothes that hangeth in ye lowe Newe parlor next ye chappell at batnall¹ . . . of folery worke with dyvers beastes and fulls 30s 3d."² The editor of the *Journal* interprets the word "folery" as "foliage" and the word "Fulls" as "fowls," but there seems to be no authority for this, and a few weeks later the Prior notes the purchase of more hangings of the same sort, and definitely says they were painted with beasts and fools "bowht at london peynted cloths . . . for ye myddull chambur at batnall of ye warke of folery with divers beestes and foolis, 31s 5d. Ye carage ther of 16d."³

At a time when professional fools were numerous, and he kept a domestic fool himself,⁴ the Prior would not, if he really meant "birds," be at all likely to put the word "fools." Also, when he or his secretary described coverlets of tapestry that were decorated with trees and foliage in his manors of Crowle, Grymley and Batnall he used the word "verdure," which was then and is to this day the right word for describing tapestry

¹ Batnall was the Prior's grange nearest to the monastery.

² Worcester Historical Society, *Journal of Prior More*, p. 263.

³ Page 264.

⁴ See pp. 83 and 121 of the printed *Journal*.

of trees, foliage, grass and flowers. For example, in an inventory of the Prior's goods at Crowle noted in May 1532, occurs "a second coverlet and bedcloth of verdure with best, dog, catt, counys etc." In almost the next line he has, "Item the chambur hanged with paynted clothes of folery with bests, fulls," and the next line but one to that, "a bedclothe of grene verdure." A good example of the "drollery" subject is carved on the front of a long coffer in the collection of Mr. Laurence J. Cadbury (Fig. 46.) At Ixworth Abbey in Suffolk is, or was, a large panel of tapestry with a jester with cap and bells and clad in the professional motley. In Taylor's *Wit and Mirth* (Tale 103) we are told of a Parlour which was fairly hung with Tapestry hangings, and in every one of the hangings was the figure of a fool wrought.

At Abington Hall "pretty slight drolleries" are carved in several of the oak panels. In one a professional jester is shown lying on his back on a grassy bank, amidst the boughs of a grape-vine on which is a wooden vessel with two handles, three hoops, and a tap. The jester has drawn out the wooden spigot from the tap and is absorbing the wine at his ease. He is clothed in short breeches, and a coat of motley which is continuous with the hood. The coat is cut in jags at the bottom edge and each jag ends in a bell, and there is another bell on the liripipe of his hood. In his left hand he is holding a flail-shaped weapon or large ladle, the handle terminating in a small bladder (Fig. 47).

Prior More of Worcester had a domestic fool named Roger Knight, and in 1519 "payd for Roger Kynzthes coote of moteley with ye makyn 11s 6d." Again in 1520 "payd for vj stycks and a halff of motley 2od ye styke for Roger knyzthes coote 10s 1od; the makyn to John taylor 12d"; and sixteen other items of expense for his clothing occur in the diary.

At Abington there is another of the drollery subjects on a very long panel, with a background of vine branch (Fig. 48). In the centre is a Morris Dancer, who is wearing a slashed doublet with short and wide sleeves, short knee-breeches edged with bells, and low shoes. He is dancing with outspread arms and legs. On his left is a girl holding a big flower, and behind

[*Laurence J. Cudhury, Esq.*]

Photograph by courtesy of]

FIG. 46.—Grotesque carving



her is a jester imitating a musician by means of a long ladle and a bladder. He has the same coat of motley as the former jester with the same bells hanging from it and from the lower edges of his breeches. He is most probably intended in both panels to represent Sir John Bernard's domestic fool. On the other side of the central dancer is a similarly dressed juggler who is revolving on the upright point of a sword and at the end a Morris dancer playing on the usual pipe and tabor, while seated on a stool; above him a small pitcher is suspended. These carvings are the more interesting because they decorated the home of Shakespeare's granddaughter.

At Haddon Hall in the dining-room is a carved panel of a jester said to represent the favourite fool of one of the Vernons. At Maxstoke Castle, Warwickshire, is an oil painting of Tom Grainger, the last jester there. His bauble used to lie on the great hall table till a few years ago.

In the inventory already mentioned of King Henry VIII's pictures, made in 1542, is "Item a Table wth the pictures of the ffrenche kynge, the quene his wiffe, and the foole standyng behynde wth a curtyne to it of the same sarconette."

In 1548 Isabell Craike, of Bishop Burton, York, left to her son's son "all my stuff within the greate chamber in Beverlae, that is to sae, the chamber hinginges of fullerie worke payntid etc." Such subjects were sometimes, especially in carvings, called "antic" work; a word which the *New English Dictionary* says was not developed in England from "Antique," but "was a distinct use of the word from its first introduction," and indicates "fantastic representations of human, animal, and floral forms incongruously running into one another." Shakespeare must have been well acquainted with these painted drolleries, and when in *The Tempest* Prospero calls up spirits in strange shapes who perform weird actions and dances, Alonso, Sebastian, and their company are astonished to see the grotesque conceptions of painters come to life, Sebastian exclaiming, "A living drollery! Now will I believe that there are unicorns; that in Arabia there is one tree, the phoenix throne," etc. Shakespeare does not mention the word drollery except in that sense, and when he uses the word "antics" it is always the sense of grotesque people or monsters, for instance, in the Induction

to *The Taming of the Shrew*, when the Duke has warned the players that they must not laugh at Christopher Sly, and they reply, "We can contain ourselves Were he the veriest antic in the world."¹ "There the antic sits, Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp" (*Richard II*, Act III, Scene 2).

"THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL"

The second of the stock subjects mentioned by Falstaff, *The Story of the Prodigal*, was a very popular one in the sixteenth century, and though Biblical, was often carved, painted or woven in the wall decorations of domestic rooms. Its varied scenes, the "Departure from Home," "Wasting his patrimony with Harlots," "Tending the Swine" etc., gave great scope for picturesque and popular treatment, and, as is illustrated by an incident in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, was to be found even in taverns. "There's his chamber," says the Host of the Garter, indicating Falstaff's room to the messenger of Master Slender, "his house, his castle . . . 'tis painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. Go, knock and call."²

In the cathedral city of Shakespeare's diocese, in 1605, was a group of three such painted hangings. At the death of Christofer Coxe of St. Helens, Worcester, "In the Hall thre Painted Clothes aboute the sayd Rome conteigninge the Storye of the prodigall Childe."³

Tapestries being so much more valuable than painted linen or buckram, the subjects depicted on them are more fully and frequently recorded in inventories; and a study of such lists immediately reveals the fact that the Parable of the Prodigal Son was one of the most favourite subjects.

At the three palaces of Greenwich, Hampton Court, and Otelands, there were many precious and beautiful tapestries that in 1542 were in the possession of Henry VIII, the manuscript list of which is in the British Museum.⁴ It contains a great many on which the Prodigal's adventures were depicted. At Greenwich there were "5 peces of forlornne sonne all de filio

¹ *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, Sc. 1.

² *Act IV, Sc. 5.*

³ Inventory of a butcher in Worcester Probate Registry.

⁴ Bibl. Harl., No. 1419.



FIG. 47.—Panelling at Abington Hall, showing professional jester



FIG. 48.—“A pretty slight Drollery”

prodigo," "4 peces of Ymagerye of Thistorye of filius prodigus and 6 pieces of Thistorye of filius prodigus." At Hampton Court were "1 pece of Tapestrie of Thistorye of Filius Prodigus having bordres of the Cardinall's armes¹ 4 peces of Tapestrie of Filius Prodigus having the Kinge's armes in theym. 5 peces of course Tapistrye of Filius Prodigus," and one more of the same subject. At Otelands were ten more of the same, and in every list where the tapestry is described they are numerous.

"THE GERMAN HUNTING IN WATERWORK"

Representations of forest scenes with numerous birds and animals were popular, and *The German Hunting in Waterwork* had no doubt hounds, game and quarry in liberal profusion. In a series of engravings of hunting subjects drawn by a Flemish artist who was born at Bruges but who lived for a long time in Italy, and designed many sporting subjects for wall hangings, is one called *Fox and Hare Hunting*, which should give an idea of what Falstaff's *German Hunting in Waterwork* was like. The artist called himself Stradanus, but his real name was Joannes van der Straet.

The centre of the composition is occupied by two horsemen (one armed with a long spear, the other blowing a horn), who are charging at full gallop upon two foxes and a hare in the immediate foreground. A hound who accompanies the huntsman has seized one fox who is retaliating by biting his leg. The other fox is in great jeopardy from the spear of the first huntsman, but is galloping hard with a very plump hare in front of him, also galloping. Behind these two a hound is coming over the bank close to the hare, and would certainly capture it but for a partial paralysis of the legs. On the right a fox is disappearing into a bush from the other side of which a very frightened hare is emerging. Above them a large tree has had several branches sawn off so that we may see a beater with a long stick vigorously thrashing the bushes, and behind him another horseman with a spear carried on his shoulder is galloping to join the foreground group. Above him in the

¹ Of course the arms of Wolsey.

distance are two men leading a bear. On the extreme left is a man on foot with a horn slung over his shoulder carrying a long stick and walking away towards the middle distance, where a group of beaters are thrashing a row of bushes from which a fox and three more hares are issuing; these have been perceived by a large dog, who is bounding towards them. Beyond the beaters is a long ridge on which three men with cross-bows are shooting into a valley, which is closed in by a long net, or lattice paling, inside which five more hares are racing about. A dog is running towards them and another is standing on the ridge and gazing at them. The print is dated 1576, and represents a very animated scene, well calculated to afford amusement to Mistress Quickly's customers.

Numerous examples of the subjects that were woven on tapestry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are mentioned in the inventory already referred to which was made for Henry VIII in 1542, and which may be supposed to give a more general idea of the tapestries of England, because it seems probable that many of the hangings in these long and varied lists may have come from dissolved monasteries, and therefore were from various sources. In this list¹ are "2 peces of the Seven Ages," many of hawking and hunting, "the forlornne sonne" in "5 peces," "2 peces Salomon wt two roundelles having scriptures within the same roundelles." This was probably the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. Then there were "4 peces of Ymagerye of thistorye of filius prodigus." Also "5 peces of Tapestrye of the IX worthies wt the Cardinall's armes," "6 peces of the IX Worthies having borders of the late Cardinall's armes." Seven more of the Prodigal Son. "1 window pece of Tapestry of the nyne Worthies."² "9 peces of thistorye of Troye," "11 peces of the Siege of Troie," "1 pece with sondrie white sheldes of scriptures. A Counterpoint of Tapestry with the VII Synes in the border."³ This was a counterpane or bedspread; such things

¹ Brit. Mus. Bibl. Harl. No. 1419, printed in *Tapestry*,³ by W. G. Thompson.

² The Nine Worthies were three Jews, Joshua, David and Judas Maccabeus; three pagans, Hector, Alexander and Julius Caesar; and three Christians, Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon.

³ The Seven Deadly Sins were Pride, Wrath, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Avarice and Sloth.

were generally made of tapestry. "I pece of olde Tapestry of the Dome." The subject of this was the Day of Judgement, such as was painted above the chancel arch in the Guild Chapel at Stratford on Avon and of which considerable remains still exist. Then there were four old pieces each, of "Troie," of Hercules and Triumphs, and about thirty of the Prodigal.

In the catalogue of *pictures* belonging to the same King, no items of which I think have ever been printed, there are some painted cloths. "Item Thistorye of Judithe strikinge Oliferuns heade painted upon tike," and again, "Item thistorye of David strykinge of Goliathes heade painted upon tike and nailed upon a paine of wood. Item a painted Clothe wt the Tryimph called the hurlinge of the caves sette in a frame of woode all mittre clooure."

I cannot help thinking that these two last items show how our modern pictures, which are painted on strong linen canvas strained on a deal stretcher and nailed round the edge, came to be evolved from the wooden "table" or panel. "Tick" is a strong linen fabric such as feather beds are encased in, and evidently it was discovered that a painted cloth which was too small or too valuable to serve for hangings, could be strained on a frame of wood, then placed in a gilded or painted frame and hung on the wall as the "tables" had always been. The word "panc" meant a strip and most of the pictures in these Wardrobe Accounts are stated to have had curtains of green and yellow sarcenet "paned" together, which meant that the curtains were made of strips joined together at the edges.

In the sixteenth century it was usual to hang a curtain before all pictures to prevent the sun fading them, and to keep off the dust. In *Twelfth Night*, in reply to Sir Andrew Ague-cheek's boastings, Sir Toby Belch says scoffingly: "Wherefore are these things hid? wherefore have these gifts a curtain before them? are they like to take dust, like Mistress Mall's picture?"¹ And when Olivia unveils before Viola she says, "But we will draw the curtain and show you the picture. Look you, sir such a one as I was this present. Is't not well done?"² Also in

¹ Act I, Sc. 3.

² Act I, Sc. 5. It is not for me to correct learned editions, but I should have thought that it should have been "such a one as I was, this presents."

Troilus and Cressida, Pandarus says, "Come, draw this curtain, and let's see your picture."

A table early in the sixteenth century, when what we call a table was known as a "bord," meant a framed painting for hanging upon a wall,¹ and as a rule one that was painted on a panel. But in the inventory of Henry VIII, it would seem that the word "table" sometimes meant the frame of a picture and also that it was used for framed carvings or enamels or even needlework when hung up. For example, the following are from the inventory of King Henry VIII's pictures which is headed "Tables wt pictures": "Item. A table having in it the five woundes embrodered uppon blacke Satten. Item a table of Allabastre wt the picture of Saincte John the Evangeliste. Item a folding Table of the passyon enamyled sette in a lether guilte. Item a Table like a booke wt the pictures of Kynge Henry theight and Quene Jane. Item a Table wt the picture of the Kyng's Maiestie with a curteyne of yellow and White Sarconette paned together. Item another Table wt the whole Stature of the Kynge's Maiestie stayned uppon a clothe with a curteyne of green Sarconette. Item a Table of wallnuttre wt the picture of Sayncte George on horsebacke raised wt liquide golde and siluer. Item a Table of the buryall of oure lorde all of sondrye woodes ioyned togithers."

HOW THE PRIOR HUNG HIS ROOMS

Painted or stained cloths had an advantage over tapestry in that they were more readily adapted to the varying sizes of the spaces which were left in a room, by the doors, windows, fireplaces, or other recesses, and could either be painted to fit them, or cut to the contours of the spaces to be filled.

It is obvious that a cloth depicting histories, scenery or imagery could not be cut without reference to the subjects, but it could be altered with much less cost and trouble than tapestry. Prior More, in redecorating his Worcestershire granges, would buy painted cloths of large size for the halls and great chambers, but for the smaller rooms they were generally executed on the spot.

¹ From the French word *tableau*.

The Prior's method seems to have been to send for the painter and the tailor, having already bought a quantity of coarse linen canvas, called soultwich, for the borders, and of "say" for the panels, the latter probably being powdered with a simple pattern, fleur-de-lis, crowned roses, or perhaps port-cullises.¹ The tailor cut the material to fit the spaces, and the linen canvas to the right width for the borders, and stitched them on. The painter then painted the borders on the spot.

In 1520 the Prior "payd for a peynted cloth of ,e IX wurdyes XIIIJ ycards & IIJ quarters long 10s od." This is entered in the *Journal*, and an entry in another book which still exists at Worcester Cathedral mentions "a peynted cloth of the IX wordys in the priors chamber at the more,"² which as the dimensions and the price are similar, was no doubt the same cloth. Nearly fifteen yards is such a great length that it could hardly have been in one piece. It must have been made in several sections, and probably decorated the walls right round the room. One has to remember, however, that painted cloths or stained ones, or woven tapestries, were not decorative only, they were intended to keep out draughts and make the rooms more snug, and therefore were often hung over the doors and recesses, especially those that were not much used.

There are many instances in old plays which show that hiding behind the hangings of a room was a well-known trick. Dr. Johnson was probably wrong in suggesting that Shakespeare had outstepped probability in supposing Falstaff to sleep behind the hangings, on account of his bulk.³ In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Woman Hater*⁴ one of the characters says, "I have of yore made many a scrambling-meal, In corners behind arrases, on Stairs," etc.

For the decoration of his manor-house at Batnall the Prior paid in 1518 "for lynyn cloth for bordurs to ye lyttul parlor within ye lyttul hall & ye parlor at batnall 12s od. Item for ye peyntyng of ye same to thomas peynter 3s 4d. Item for Sowyng of ye honggyng sayes in ye seyd parlors & for thryd 12d."

¹ The Prior gave handsome prices for his panels of say. In 1518 he paid "for VJ peces of sayes for to hang batnal chambers" the large sum of £5. "Say" was a delicate kind of serge or woollen cloth (p. 75).

² The Moor was another of the Prior's manor-houses.

³ Second part, *Henry IV*, Act II, Sc. 4.

⁴ Act III, Sc. 4.

Again at Batnall "payd to thomas peynter for peyntyng ye bordurs in ye lyttul parlor withyn ye lyttul hawle 5s. 4d."

In 1519 the Prior notes in his *Journal*, "Item for lynnен cloth for bordurs to peynt for ye hall at grymley 2s 5d. Item for ye peyntyng of ye same to thomas peynter 2s 8d." At Grimley Park he had another manor-house as well as The Moor near Newnham in the Teme valley. In 1520 the Prior was starting to renew the hangings in the monastery at Worcester. He notes in his *Journal* that he had bought "lynnен cloth. Item payd for xxij^t Ells of Sowtewyche saff a quarter for bordurs to ye stone chambur 8s od." In 1521 there is an entry "Item payd to John taylor for Sowyng of ye hangyngs of ye stonne chambur 5s od, ye bordurs & hangyngs of ye ston chambur. Item for . . . ells of Sultwyche for ye bordurs of ye stone chambur 8s od.¹ Item to thomas kyngs, peynter for peyntyng of ye seyd bordurs 3d a yearde 11s od."²

A little later he records expenses at the manor-house at Batnall, where the hall and chambers must have been spacious judging by the dimensions of the cloths. "Item payd for 53 ells of lynnен cloth called sultwyche to hang ij chambers at batnall 19s 1od." The Prior in later parts of his diary gives further details of his purchases of painted cloths, and of borders that he had had painted, but they are too long to quote and do not give any description of them, except the sizes. There is, however, an inventory attached to the will (dated 1557) of his successor at the Cathedral, Dean Philip Ballard alias Hawford, in which the hangings of several chambers are mentioned. Some of these that have say or buckram in the middle had Biblical subjects in the borders. Philip Ballard had been presented to the Rectory of Elmley Lovett, near Droitwich, and in the parlour there were "Yowlo and redde hangyngs of buckram with a border of Abraham xiijs iiijd." "In the myddle Chambre. A testerne paned of sylke of gold with a fringe of redde and blewe and the curtons of redde and yolow saye xs. Hangyngs of stained damaske worke with a border of the historie of the passion xiijs. iiijd." At Worcester: "In the parlor. A countre table vs. Hangyngs of redde and grene with a border of the historie of the towre of babylon xxs."

¹ Page 131.

² Page 132.

I think it is extremely probable that these were a few of the cloths that were made to the order of Prior More; because, although the accounts of his retirement and death are mostly wrong, it is evident that the bargain that he made with Thomas Cromwell at the time of his retirement broke down and became obsolete when the monastery was dissolved, so that the chamber at Worcester and the grange at Crowle were, after the accession of Mary, occupied by Dean Ballard.

SHAKESPEARE THE BOY

It is unfortunate that Prior More so seldom mentions the subjects of his cloths, but we do know a number of those that were most popular when Shakespeare was young, and what a fascinating raree-show do they open out to us! What a phantasmagoria do they not unfold, of varied imagery, of Classic mythology, myths and fables, parables from Scripture, saints and demons!

And the boy William? How much did they mean to him, these storied hangings and their admonitory inscriptions? When in the long winter nights the flickering flames rose and fell on his father's hearth, and the bright flashes chased one another across the walls, what visions might he not have espied, what shapes would start into life? These gods and devils, heroes and beggars, revels of prodigals, sieges of cities, forests and leafy glades. What fantastic dreams, what thick-coming fancies would an imaginative child indulge? "Such tricks hath strong imagination!"

And as he grew in years and grammar school learning and visited the homes of his uncles and aunts, who can tell how much the Classical Mythology of these old hangings, the Bible incidents, the histories and tragedies, the antics and mummeries, the sage proverbs, wise saws and mottoes which surrounded him may have meant for him? Can we hope to measure the influence they may have had on the poet and the works he has left us?

When later he went out into the world and the doors of great homes were opened to him and his fellow-players, the walls of such houses were hung with the superb tapestries of

which we can form some faint idea by the fine examples that remain to us, though they are but a faded residuum of the gorgeous hangings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

SHAKESPEARE'S LOVE OF PAINTINGS

In writing of the Poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Sir Walter Raleigh says: "They deal with disappointment, crime, passion and tragedy, yet are destitute of feeling for the human situation and are, in effect, painless. This painlessness, which made Hazlitt compare them to a couple of ice-houses, is due not to insensibility in the poet, but his preoccupation with his art. He handles life from a distance, at two removes, and all the emotions awakened by the poems are emotions felt in the presence of art, not those suggested by life. The arts of painting and rhetoric are called upon to lend to poetry their subjects and their methods. From many passages in the plays it may be inferred that Shakespeare loved painting, and was familiar with a whole gallery of Renaissance pictures. Portia's elaborate comparison of Bassanio to

young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster:

is only one of many allusions which can be nothing but reminiscences of pictures; and in the induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* the servants submit to Christopher Sly a catalogue which is the best possible commentary on Shakespeare's early poems:

We will fetch thee straight,
Adonis painted by a running brook
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,¹ etc.

I think, however, that practically all these paintings which Shakespeare would appear to have seen, and which so influenced him and his work, were much more likely to have been tapestries and cloths stained or painted than the framed

¹ Sir Walter says further of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*: "It would not be rash to say outright that both the poems were suggested by pictures and must be read and appreciated in the light of that fact." —Raleigh, *Shakespeare*, pp. 81 and 82.

pictures such as Sir Walter Raleigh was thinking of. I have searched through many long inventories made about the time that Shakespeare lived, but only found a few in which there are what one could call pictures, and those appear to have been portraits. In the house of Lady Dorothie Shirley "att Farrington in the countie of Barkes," 1620, there were "Fifteen English pictures, hangd in tables att the upper end of the galerie," also "xxvij pictures of Romans and Emperours at the lower end of the gallerie."

There were, in fact, actual painted cloths representing the subjects of both poems to which Sir Walter Raleigh alludes. Judging by a scene in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*¹ (1611), painted cloths were used on the stage for backgrounds early in the seventeenth century. It also shows that the *Rape of Lucrece* and the *Conversion of St. Paul* were among the "Histories" that were depicted on them. In the *History of Tapestry*² is mentioned an Italian panel of tapestry made in the sixteenth century of "a history of Lucrece."

Old painted cloths are regrettably few. There are one or two very late ones in museums, but the finest that I know of are a set in the chapel at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire. These are extremely well painted and would seem to have been done by a designer of tapestry. The borders have the character of Elizabethan work.

The only other very interesting cloth known to me is an exceptionally large one at Coughton Court, seven miles from Stratford, which was found some years ago by Sir William Throckmorton in an attic there, rolled up and in bad condition. It was restored under the superintendence of the late Sir W. St. John Hope, and is of great interest. There is a long account of it in *The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*.³ It has a representation of the Resurrection at the top. Below a sketchy view of Ely Cathedral, and many rows of circular medallions with heads of English kings and queens, bishops, abbots, priors and deans, but it is all rather puzzling.⁴

¹ Quoted in *Shakespeare, His Family and Friends*, Elton.

² W. G. Thompson, p. 248.

³ Second Series, xxiii, 1909–10, pp. 255 seq.

⁴ It is dated 1596, so Shakespeare probably saw it.

Commentators have marvelled at the familiarity shown by Falstaff and other Shakespearean characters (even Mistress Quickly) with the incidents of the Old and New Testaments, but in a society that lived in rooms that were painted with Biblical subjects, or hung with stained or painted cloths, that worshipped in buildings whose walls were decorated with stories taken from the Scriptures, it does not follow that they were greatly given to reading the Bible.

Donald Lupton, writing about the year 1600, of Ale-houses, says: "In these houses you shall see the History of Judeth, Susanna, Daniel in the Lyons Den or Dives and Lazarus painted vpon the wall."¹

When William Shakespeare grew to manhood, and wrote plays, painted cloths had become numerous, and their mottoes rather hackneyed, but in earlier times very great people had valued them. Of such there are various instances.

In the "Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellor of England," printed in 1557, is described a series of such hangings which the great Chancellor had designed about the year 1495 or 1496.

"Mayster Thomas More in his youth deuysed in hys fathers house in London, a goodly hangyng of fyne paynted clothe, with nyne pageauntes, and verses ouer of euery of those pageauntes: which verses expressed and declared, what the ymages in those pageauntes represented: and also in those pageauntes were paynted, the thynges that the verses ouer them dyd (in effecte) declare, whitche verses here folowen.

"In the first pageant was painted a boy playing at the top and squyrge.² And over this pageaunt was writhen as foloweth:

"CHYLDHOD

"I am called Chyldhod, in play is all my mynde,
To cast a coyte, a cokstele, and a ball.
A toppe can I set, and dryve it in his kynde
But would to god these hatefull bookees all,
Were in a fyre brent to pouder small.
Then myght I lede my lyfe alwayes in play:
Whiche lyfe god sende me to myne endyng day."³

¹ *Aungerville Society Reprints*, p. 32.

² The above is the whole verse.

³ Whip, or scourge.

"In the second pageaunt was paynted a goodly freshe yonge man, rydyng uppon a goodly horse, havnnge an hawke on his fyste, and a brase of grayhowndes folowynge hym. And under the horse fete, was paynted the same boy, that in the fyrst pageaunte was playinge at the top and squyrg. And over this second pageant the wrytyng was thus:

"MANHOOD

"Manhood I am, therefore I me delyght
 To hund and hawke, to nowrishe up and fede
 The grayhounde to the course, the hawke to the flyght,
 And to bestryde a good and lusty stede, etc.¹

"In the thyrd pagiaunt, was paynted the goodly younge man in the seconde pagiaunt lyeng on the grounde. And upon hym stode ladye Venus goddes of love, and by her upon this man stode the lytle god Cupyde. And over this thyrd pageaunt, this was the wrytyng that foloweth:

"VENUS AND CUPYDE

"Who so ne knoweth the strength power & myght,
 Of Venus and me her lytle sonne Cupyde,²

"In the fourth pageaunt was paynted an old sage father sittynge in a chayre. And lyeng under his fete was painted the ymage of Venus and Cupyde, that were in the third pageant. And over this forth pageaunt the scripture was thus:

"AGE

"Olde Age am I, with lokkes thynne and hore,
 Of our short lyfe, the last and best part.³

"In the fyfth pageaunt was paynted an ymage of Death and under hys fete lay the olde man in the fourth pageaunt. And above this fift pageant, this was the saying:

"DETH

"Though I be foule ogly lene and mysshape
 Yet there is none in all this worlde wyde
 That may my power withstande or escape.⁴

¹ The first four lines only.

² The first two lines only.

³ The first two lines only.

⁴ Three lines only.

"In the sixt pageant was painted lady Fame. And under her fete was the picture of Death that was in the fifth pageaunt. And ouer this sixt pageant the writing was as foloweth:

"FAME"

"Fame I am called, maruayle you nothyng
Though I with tonges am compassed all rounde
For in voyce of people is my chiefe liuyng.
O cruel death, thy power I confounde.¹

"In the seventh pageant was painted the ymage of Tyme, and under hys fete was lyeing the picture of Fame that was in the sixt pageant, and this was the scripture ouer this seuenth pageaune:

"TYME"

"I whom thou seest with horyloge in hande
Am named tyme, the lord of euery howre
I shall in space destroy both see and lands.

"In the eyght pageant was pictured the ymage of lady Eternitee, sittynge in a chayre under a sumtious clothe of estate, crowned with an imperiall crown and under her fete lay the picture of Time that was in the seventh pageaunt and above this eyght pageaunt was it writen as foloweth:

"ETERNITEE"

"Me nedeth not to bost, I am Eternitee.
The very name signifyeth well,
That myne empyre infinite shalbe.
Thou mortall Tyme euery man can tell,
Art nothyng else but the mobilite
Of sonne and mone chaungyng in euery degré,
When they shall leue theyr course thou shalt be brought,
For all thy pride and bostyng into nought.²

"In the nynth pageant was painted a Poet sitting in a chayre. And over this pageant were there writen these verses in latin folowyng:

"THE POET"³

¹ First four lines only.

² The whole verse.

³ The verses are not given for lack of space. A modern facsimile of this book has recently been printed.

Chapter VII

The Bridge and Grammar School

WHEN somewhere about the year 1535 John Leland rode into the town over the “great and sumtuose” bridge of “14 great archis of stone and a long cawsey made of stone,” the bridge was new. It had been built by a Lord Mayor of London, as a gift to his native town only thirty odd years before, and still bears Hugh Clopton’s name.

But now the bridge is old. It has stood for more than four centuries; since 1490 it has braved not only the battle and the breeze but the floods also. It has seen much marching and counter-marching, many alarums and excursions, and some of its arches have been blown up by the gunpowder of opposing armies. It has, however, no tower for defence as most Gothic bridges had, and its obsolete turnpike tower no longer challenges the passer-by but leaves even wheeled vehicles, “neat cattle” and other four-footed beasts to go past toll-free. Its enemies now are of a different sort; rampant, impatient motorists, restless enterprising bridge wideners, *et hoc genus omne*.

It has twice undergone a widening process, and except on the lower side, no longer presents the exact lineaments of the bridge that Sir Hugh Clopton built, and which John Leland so much admired. On the upper side the narrow, pointed Gothic arches can still be seen under the wide segmental eighteenth-century ones, and above these an iron footpath, carried on iron brackets. This last was added in the nineteenth century, and would have been quite durable if it had been much simpler.

These alterations have left the bridge somewhat mutilated

because its original parapet on the upper side has gone, and narrow as it seems to us, the original bridge was much narrower, yet it was more than big enough for the traffic it was designed to serve. Horses, with pack-saddles and their various trappings, provided the chief means of transport, and the slow crawl of the ox-wagon was the heaviest burden it had to bear. Horses were very numerous and carts were few: sheep and cattle crossed in droves, pack-horses in strings with one man to each half-dozen.¹ The carrier of the sixteenth century relied but little on carts, and still trusted his loads to the sturdy backs of his horses, variously known as load-horses, mail-horses, sumpter-horses, or pack-horses. Nearly all travellers, except the very wealthiest, journeyed on horseback, and foot-passengers were eyed with suspicion.

As the years rolled on, the old bridge has witnessed many changes, taken part in scenes stirring and stagnant, peaceful and warlike. It has carried the soldier and the priest, the weary ploughman and the jaunty falconer, the hermit and the minstrel; strolling players, sack-laden donkeys, bear-leaders, ladies in litters, the farmer with his wife on the pillion, the warrener with his catch of conies. All these has it carried on its back a thousand times. The quondam Prior of Worcester, William More, when living with his brother at Alveston, must have crossed it on many occasions, not in his former stately array with a retinue of squires and gentlemen, but in the days of his retirement with perhaps one mounted servant, and a nephew.²

The fourteen original arches are plainly visible on the lower side of the bridge, but the long row of pointed apertures unrelieved by any projecting piers though varying in detail are somewhat monotonous. Fed by dust that falls and damp that rises, its old walls are sown (*semé* like an heraldic coat) with minute creeping growths, with blots of lichens and

¹ Best's *Farming Book*, p. 102.

² The account of Prior More in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is nearly all wrong. He was not buried at Crowle but at Alveston, in the ancient church now disused. The tomb at Crowle said to be his is centuries too old. I am certain that the fine effigy which now lies at the back of the High Altar in Worcester Cathedral, is the tomb which Prior More had made for himself in London, and this I told to Canon Wilson a long time since.

streaks of moss, and in the joints and chinks with herbs and flowering plants: rich wallflowers, grey pellitory, pink valerian, diminutive, cranny-haunting ferns. (Fig. 49.)

The great Leland, coming as he probably did from Warwick past Charlecote and Thelesford Priory, would necessarily

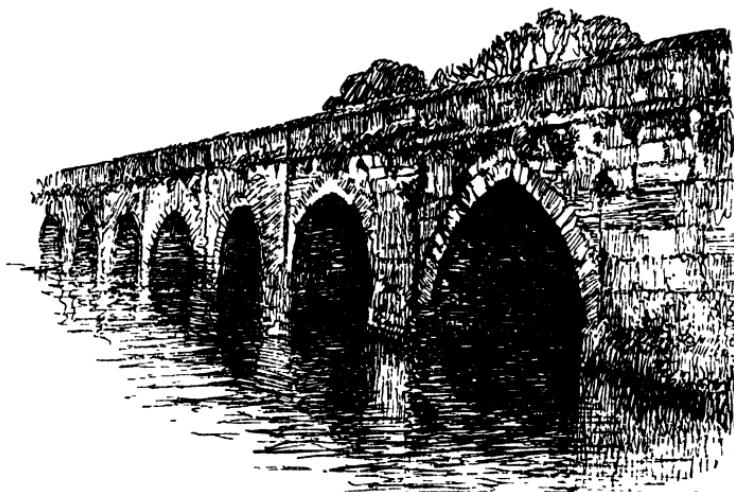


FIG. 49.—Part of Clopton Bridge

cross it. Charlecote then had not been rebuilt and was a Gothic house. Stratford, of course, was a Gothic town, as it was in Shakespeare's time, and as the middle of it is now to a great extent, with a thin veneer of much later work. The Avon was, as now, deep and sluggish, for though there was little traffic on it, and none of the big barges with sails that came up as far as Stratford in the next century, there were mills, so that there must have been weirs and flood-gates. The water is green and often still, full of juicy reflections, with luscious margins of weeds and sedge, and for many years the grey arches that were mirrored in it were the pride of that part of Warwickshire. It must be confessed that the roads in bad weather were rarely good enough for wheeled traffic; they were full of bad patches in which wheels of any sort were liable to sink, while a loaded horse could pick his way along

the drier margins. It was a habit even into the middle of the seventeenth century to stow away the ox-wagons into sheds till spring made the roads drier. Henry Best of Elmswell in Yorkshire wrote in 1641: "So soone as harvest is in, our stubble led and stackes thatched, the first lette weather or vacant time that cometh wee fetche up a payre of oxen and sette our servants to runne the waines under the helmes: and first they knocke off the shelvinges, and putte the shelvings and loade-pinnes, and pike-stowers of everie waine into her body; then doe they shoole and carrie away the dirte cleane from under the helmes.¹ Then doe they put on the oxen and bring the waines close to the end of the helme and there doe they dresse and make cleane the wheeles with a spade, then doe they runne the first three waines backwards,"² and so on in great detail.

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

As John Leland drew rein at Bridge Foot, traversed the long causeway and mounted the wider of the two streets, which were then divided by the irregular group of ancient houses called Middle Row, he would see the swine—with their yokes on, let us hope—ducks and sheep feeding in the Bankcroft, a much larger tract of grass than it is now: he would see the kites and buzzards, hawks and jackdaws in the streets, tolerated by the inhabitants because of their services in helping to clear the town of offal and garbage, though they did, now and then, snatch the bread from a wandering youngster's fist.³ He may have seen the pigs and geese, described by Halliwell-Phillipps as revelling "in the puddles and ruts" of Stratford, but if he did see them he would not have been shocked. Pigs wandered in London, and when it rained, there were puddles even there. There is no probability that there were ruts in Stratford, as there were not enough carts to make them. If there were any channels in the streets they were down the middle, not

¹ A helme was a kind of open shed.

² Surtees Society, Best's *Farming Books*, vol. 33, p. 137.

³ Camden Society, *Italian Relation of England*, p. II.

as he says at the sides, for the townsmen were compelled to pave the streets in front of their houses.¹

But Leland saw more than pigs and ducks. He saw what Halliwell-Phillipps seems to have forgotten, to wit, a Grammar School. And the Grammar School was old even then; it was "of the foundation of one Jolif, a master of arte, borne in Streotford, whereabout he had some patrimonye; and that he gave to this schole." How amazing! A Master of Arts had been born in the bookless purlieus of Stratford! But more surprising still, there had been a school there kept by the College long before his time. He died in 1485, and in *The Schools of Mediaeval England*, by A. F. Leach, the Stratford school is found to have existed in 1295.² In the first account (after three gilds had been amalgamated) "from Michaelmas 1401-2 to Michaelmas 1402-3 appears 'received of John Scolmayster for a chamber, by the year 6s. 8d.' . . . The schoolmaster is referred to again in 1412-13, when the account contains an allowance, of '4s. for the rent of St. Mary's house in Oldetown which the master and aldermen pardoned to the school master yearly so long as he wished to teach children and keep school in it.'³ St. Mary's house was the Gildhall, of St. Mary's Gild, and was by Trinity Church in the Old Town. This allowance was continued till 1417. The school was then moved. A new schoolhouse, the present picturesque Latin School in the new town, was built in 1426-7 at the cost of £9 17s. 11*½*d. A magnificent feast was given at its opening at which the Bishop of Worcester was present; seven cooks with four assistants preparing the dinner, which included a swan, venison, herons, geese, fowls, capons, rabbits, pigs, mutton and marrow bones. There was at first no separate endowment for the school, though there are frequent entries of the masters being admitted members of the gild, without, or at a reduced, entrance fee. One of these, Richard Fox, B.A., B.C.L., admitted in 1477-8, seems to have been no less a person than the future Prime Minister of Henry VII and founder of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The first step towards its separate endowment was taken 6 October, 1456

¹ *View of Frankpledge*, October 6, 1559.

² Page 242.

³ Page 241.

. . . by deed of 7 July 1482 Master Thomas Jolyffe gave 'all his lands' to the master, warden and proctors of the gild to 'find a priest fit and able in learning to teach grammar freely to all the scholars coming to him to school in the said town, taking nothing from his scholars for his teaching.'¹

In 1553 the new Charter of Incorporation by King Edward VI empowered the inhabitants to raise the Master's salary from £10 a year to £20. In 1554 the new governing body made an agreement with "or trysty and wellbelouyd William Smart bachelor of art now Schoolmaster w^t vs in the said borrowe of Stratford,"² confirming to him the stipend of £20 a year, in consideration of which he agreed "delygently to employ hymself w^t suche godly wysdom and larnynge as god hathe and shall endwe hym w^t: to lerne and teche in the said gramer scole all such Scolares and chylder as shall fortun to cum thether to lerne godly lernynge and wysdom beyng set for the gramer scoll or at least wyez entred or redy to enter into ther accydence and principalles of gramer."³

Shakespeare's father in 1571 had been elected chief Alderman of the Corporation that made the above very liberal arrangement (twenty pounds being a large sum in those times and more than double the stipend of many provincial school-masters), and we can take it for granted that his son William, who was then over seven years of age, would be one of such scholars and children who were "set" for the Grammar School, and that he was, at least, ready to enter into his accidence and grammar, that is to say, that he had been learning or was ready to learn Latin. In his *History of the Horn-book*, Mr. Andrew W. Tuer, F.S.A., expressed much surprise and disappointment that he had never been able to find any trace of horn-books⁴ in any cathedral libraries, or public schools of old foundation, though he had "badgered the headmaster or librarian of every public school in Great Britain, about horn-books but not one specimen was to be found."⁵ In the

¹ Pages 242 and 243.

² Printed in Dugdale Society, vol. i, p. 33.

³ Dugdale Society, vol. i, pp. 33-4.

⁴ A horn-book was simply a small piece of oakboard (shaped at the bottom into a handle) on which was placed a small printed paper with the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer.

⁵ *History of the Horn-book*, 1897, p. 6.

dozen histories of our public-schools that he examined "the word horn-book does not once occur." This is, however, not at all surprising, as most grammar schools did not teach their pupils until after they had done with any such elementary aids as horn-books.

So much has already been written on the subject of Shakespeare's education that it would be perhaps unnecessary to produce even new facts were it not for the number of people who in recent times have adopted, and who still firmly hold to, the belief that he could not have received a good education in such a small place as Stratford. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps is responsible for starting this idea, which is really mistaken and baseless. In his *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* passages constantly quoted by Baconians show that he had convinced himself that Stratford was in "a bookless neighbourhood," and that its High Bailiff and most of the Aldermen were "absolutely illiterate." It was a widespread belief in the days when his books were written that progress, enlightenment and education were continuously increasing with the passing of time. There was a cheerful but rather conceited assumption that everything modern was a great improvement on the past, together with a very hearty contempt for anything old and venerable. The people who thought of such subjects knew that much ignorance prevailed among the middle and lower classes in their own times, and that it was greater still in the age that preceded theirs. To take it for granted that the farther one went back the worse that ignorance would be found, was a very natural mistake into which many of them fell. Halliwell-Phillipps is an outstanding example of this attitude to the past. In fact, when he was writing his *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* he appears to have been quite bewildered as to how, three hundred years before, John Shakespeare could have found anybody in the town who could have taught his son "the mysteries of the horn-book and the A.B.C." He admits that "the poet somehow or other was taught to read and write, the necessary preliminaries to admission to the Free School." He adds, however, "There are few persons at that time at Stratford-on-Avon capable of initiating him even into these preparatory accomplishments."

How Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps came to think that the town, which was the third town in importance in the rich county of Warwick,¹ was in this extraordinary state of ignorance after there had been a handsomely endowed free school in the place for several centuries, he does not say, nor does he give any proofs to support his statement. He does not explain what had become of the boys who were passing through the Grammar School year after year before that time. He reluctantly admits, however, that "John Shakespeare in his official position, could hardly have encountered much difficulty in finding a suitable instructor. There was, for instance, Higford, the Steward of the Court of Record, and the person who transcribes some of his accounts when he was borough Chamberlain."

So if we are to accept the statements of the author of the *Outlines* we must picture to ourselves, if we can, the unfortunate Higford in the intervals of his professional work, which was to preside in a Court of Justice, trying to draw the young urchin's attention to "Great A, little a, and bouncing B," a task which in other Elizabethan towns we know was sometimes left to superannuated old women. Nor will our respect for Halliwell-Phillipps's historical methods be much increased when we learn who was this Henry Higford. The man who he supposes would be pointing to the A B C with a fescue,² having been overawed by John Shakespeare's official position into teaching the horn-book and the alphabet, was one of an ancient and important family of landowners at Solihull: they are mentioned in the Register of the Knowle Guild in 1511 and 1517. They had been patrons of Henwood Priory near Solihull, and two of the Prioresses had been Higfords. After its dissolution John Higford (probably Henry's father) bought the Priory and land from Henry VIII, and "having so obtained it, pulled down the church, transformed the House, and seated himself thereat."³

The Court of Record was held at Stratford every fortnight, if required, so that not oftener, and sometimes less often, than

¹ Coventry, Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon.

² A wooden pointer used by teachers.

³ Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, p. 671.

once in fourteen days, Henry Higford would ride from Solihull, about eighteen miles, and after his work was over would have to ride back again. This alone would show the absurdity of Halliwell-Phillipps's suggestion.

It would hardly be worth while to demonstrate the childishness of so many of his statements, but for the fact that numbers of people who have read them have got an impression of Stratford so repulsive that they refuse to believe that the works of Shakespeare could have been written by anyone who was reared there.

Halliwell-Phillipps says not only that John Shakespeare and his wife, but also the majority of the corporation were illiterate, not only was there scarcely anybody in the town who knew even the horn-book or the A B C, not only that Stratford was in a bookless neighbourhood, but that most of William Shakespeare's *audiences* were illiterate—the people who listened to Shakespeare's plays were illiterate!¹

Since these sweeping statements of Halliwell-Phillipps's were made, the numerous works of the late A. F. Leach have shown that from the time of King Ethelbert, A.D. 600, and the missionaries who came under the leadership of Augustine, there had been no lack of schools in England, down at any rate to the sixteenth century, which would cover the time of which Halliwell-Phillipps was writing. Leach says that Augustine "was successful in imposing on the English the Roman ritual and the Roman religious books. . . . To do this, the missionaries had to come with the Latin service-book in one hand, and the Latin grammar in the other. Not only had the native priests to be taught the tongue in which their services were performed, but the converts, at least of the upper classes, had to be taught the elements of grammar before they could grasp the elements of religion. They could not profitably go to church till they had first gone to school. So the Grammar School became in theory as it often was in fact, the necessary ante-room, the vestibule of the church."²

Neither Halliwell-Phillipps nor any other student had grasped the real position of schools and education in the England of

¹ *Outlines*. Vol. I. p. 117.

² A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Mediaeval England*, p. 3.

past times until the various works of Mr. A. F. Leach were published. Even the late Dr. F. J. Furnivall informed Mr. Leach that "there were no Grammar Schools in England before Edward VI. Soon convinced to the contrary, he was always ready to impart instances of earlier schools which he came across in his wide reading in ancient manuscripts and books."¹ In another work, *English Schools at the Reformation*, Mr. Leach gives a great many extracts from Chantry Certificates and Warrants, of the time of Henry VIII, which show that very frequently a part of the ancient endowment was to pay the priest to teach children. Under the head of "Schools in Connection with Hospitals" there are other instances, but not so many. Again on page 34 he says, "After, if not before Hospitals, Guilds were the most ancient source of Schools . . . a Guild being established and maintaining as it almost invariably did, one or more priests or chaplains to say grace, and to pray for the souls of its members, which . . . was one of the chief objects of Guilds, the priest either *proprio motu* or at the discretion of the Guild, kept a School."²

CHANTRY SCHOOLS

Under the head of "Chantry Schools," Mr. Leach says: "We must now come to the latest and largest class of institution in connection with Schools, the Chantries. A Chantry (cantaria) was an endowment for a priest to sing for the soul of some dead person. In a sense all the monasteries were nothing but large Chantries."³ Under "The Chantries Act of Henry VIII," he says, "While the dissolution of the smaller monasteries damaged learning to a very small extent, if at all, the Act confirming the dissolution of the larger monasteries unfortunately included Colleges and Hospitals, and other 'ecclesiastical' institutions."⁴

¹ A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Mediaeval England*, Preface.

² A. F. Leach, *English Schools at the Reformation*, p. 34.

³ Ib., p. 47.

⁴ Ib., p. 59.

AFTER THE REFORMATION

Hitherto the teaching of children by chantry priests had been voluntary except in cases where the founder of the chantry had arranged that a school was to be kept also. But when the Reformation came the chantry priests were ordered to turn their attention to the teaching of young children. Stratford was then in the Diocese of Worcester, and among the injunctions issued by the Bishop in 1537 was the following: "Item, that ye and every one of you that be Chauntrre Prestes, doe instructe and teache the Children of your Paryshe, such as will come to you, at the least to rede Englishe."¹

As we have already seen that there was in Stratford a large and costly building in which the priests of the Guild said and sung the prayers for the souls of the deceased members, it is practically certain that when the above injunctions were issued they would conduct a school of a preparatory character. But it seems that they must, long before then, have taught children in the Chapel. In a great many of the documents quoted by Mr. Leach it is evident that the school was taught in the church or chapel. In many churches the chantries were inside the aisles or transepts, but that did not prevent them being used for keeping school; such an arrangement would be still more probable when the chapel was a separate building. It is on record that the Guild Chapel in Stratford was used for that purpose and familiar enough to Shakespeare,² though in the seventeenth century it was forbidden to be so used.³ A local instance was at Coughton where Sir Robert Throckmorton in the 10th of Henry VIII, left money "to the Use of a Priest to sing perpetually in the North Ile of Coughton Church for his Soul and the Souls of his Ancestors . . . which Priest also to teach a Grammar School freely for all his Tenants children, and to have yearly thereof viii li. and his chamber."⁴

In the will of Dame Thomasine Perceval, dated the Vigil of the Feast of Christmas 1510, it was provided that "a chantry

¹ Worcester Historical Society, *Early Education in Worcester*, 1913, p. 117.

² In *Twelfth Night* Maria says: "Like a pedant that keeps a school i' the church." Act III, Sc. 2.

³ *Strafford Records: Council Book B*, p. 8, and *Council Book C*, p. 9.

⁴ *Dugdale's Warwickshire*, p. 526.

with cloisters" should be built near the church of Wike St. Mary in Cornwall, which she endowed, and directed that there should be established therein "a schole for young children born in the parish and such to be always preferred as are friendless and poor. They are to be taught to read with their fescue from a boke of horn and also to write; and both as the manner was in that country when I was young."¹ (When she was young would probably have been about the reign of Edward IV.)

At Long Melford in Suffolk there stood next to the church-yard (sometimes described as in the churchyard) a large and very ancient house called the College, and one end of it was used as a school. In the will of the owner, Robert Harset,² dated 1484, he desired that it should belong to the priests of Melford, and he expressly stipulated that the west end of the house "wher the children lerne" should continue to be used for a schoolroom. This building was allowed to decay, and the eastern half in 1665 was pulled down, since which time the remainder has disappeared; but at the east end of the church, and distinct from it, is a very beautiful and curious building of the fifteenth century which I think must have been built not only for the chapel of Our Lady but also for a school. It is mentioned in the will of John Clopton in 1497, as "oure Lady Chapell, and of the cloister ther abowte." The cloister is continued round all four sides of the chapel, opening with arcades of pillars and arches into the central chantry, except on the west where it is partly closed by a carved stone screen. At this end there was a basement chamber with a fireplace and chimney which, with a chamber above, constituted a dwelling for a chantry priest.

I have not found any direct evidence that it was *designed* for use as a school, though the multiplication table still remains on the wall. But when I read the extract already given from Dame Thomasine Perceval's will it seemed to me that the chapel at Long Melford was another example of "a chantry

¹ This extract is printed in the *History of the Horn-book*, by Andrew W. Tuer, but the author gives no reference and I have never been able to find it, though Dame Thomasine Perceval made several wills which are easily accessible.

² Sir W. Parker, *History of Long Melford*, p. 151.

with cloisters," and that it was designed originally to be used as a chantry chapel and *a school*, to supersede an earlier school.

The school founded by Dame Thomasine has been transferred to the Launceston Grammar School, and the remains of the "chantry with cloisters" in which it flourished for some centuries has been converted into houses, which now afford very little help in determining the character of the original building. But in a book published in 1811 with many charming etchings by early nineteenth-century artists, there is a plate, by Samuel Prout, of the semi-ruinous school and chantry, the architecture of which shows it to have been built about the time of Dame Thomasine Perceval's death.

At Stratford the school which was held in the Guild Chapel is referred to, in the Council minutes of 1628, as "the common Schoole," which sounds elementary, and was no doubt intended to distinguish it from the Grammar School. The purpose for which the building had been erected was the saying of prayers and masses for the welfare, here and hereafter, of the Guild members who were very numerous, often wealthy, and many of them resident in distant places. I think that this school was originally started in the Chapel by the priests of the Guild who would have little to do when the masses they had undertaken were finished. After the dissolution of the chantries the building would not as a rule be wanted on week-days except possibly by the almshouse inmates who were too infirm to attend the Parish Church.

Evidences of very elementary schools having been held in churches still remain in many parts of England, and in some instances they were so held, down even to recent times. In the old church of St. Giles at Durham, one of the flagstones of the pavement near the west end had, till the last "restoration" swept it away, the letters of the alphabet cut on it in deep and distinct characters.¹ At Stokesay in Shropshire the base of the church tower was used as a school down to modern times, and during alterations in the last century I was instrumental in saving the pedagogue's desk and other evidences of the scholastic regime there. Somewhere about the middle of the nineteenth century my father, when on a sketching

¹ Surtees Society, *Memorials of St. Giles, Durham*, vol. 95, p. 151 n.

expedition on foot, found¹ in the remote Radnorshire village of Llanbistre the parish school being held in the church tower, and I have often heard him describe the amazement and delight of the schoolmaster at seeing for the first time the Government Survey maps of that district. The towers at Llanbistre and at Stokesay, being the full width of the nave, each afforded ample room for the scholars. At Stratford St. Mary in Suffolk are stones said to be of great age, let into the outer walls of the church and each separately carved with the letters of the alphabet, the whole forming a complete series. In the cemetery attached to the twelfth-century church of Kilmalkeder, Ireland, there was till recent years a pillar of stone inscribed with the letters of the alphabet.

As I first remember the Priory church of St. Bartholomew the Great in London, a chapel opening out of the ambulatory was occupied by a noisy infant school, and another school for older children could be plainly heard, which was established in the space over the north aisle of the chancel. The stonework between the ribs of the vaulting having disappeared, the scraping of the children's feet was very obvious, and much dirt fell through the chinks of the floorboards into the church.

Both chapels over the Town gates at Warwick had schools in them in ancient times, and there was a school held in a church that has since been destroyed which stood in the market-place there.²

The medieval schoolboy was frequently an occupant of a cloister. The late Professor J. T. Micklethwaite, who was architect to Westminster Abbey, found numerous remains of "play-boards" cut in the stone seats and other convenient spots on which Nine Men's Morris and other games were played by schoolboys in past times not only in the Abbey but in the cloisters of Canterbury, Norwich, Chichester, and Salisbury. He says in an article in the *Archaeological Journal*,³ "These are a fair proportion of the old English cloisters which the destroyer and the 'restorer' have allowed to remain. But search, in any, seldom fails to detect examples of these play-boards, or of others shortly to be described."

¹ There were no railways in those days nearer to Wales than Chirk.

² Kemp, *History of Warwick*.

³ Vol. xlix, p. 319.

On this subject Mr. A. F. Leach says: "The general rule was for the monastic school proper, the school of the novices, to be held in a corner of the cloister; and there are traces of the monastic school at Canterbury as at Westminster in the cloister to this day, in the solitaire boards carved in the seats where the boys used to sit."¹

In the church at Newbold in Warwickshire there is an ancient effigy of a knight, on which the schoolboys have cut the game of Nine Men's Morris. Mr. Philip B. Chatwin, F.S.A., who told me of it, said he had seen other instances but could not remember where. A chantry chapel attached to the church at Kingsbury, North Warwickshire, was used as a school when the 1765 edition of Dugdale's *Warwickshire* was published, and two fine effigies of knights in chain mail were then in good order. When I knew the church that chantry was a coal-house and the two knights terribly worn away.

¹ *The Schools of Mediaeval England*, p. 35.

Chapter VIII

John Shakespeare of Ingon and Henley Street

AT the time of Leland's arrival in Stratford, about the year 1530, there were no Shakespeares there.¹ None are recorded in the Register of the local Guild and the southward trend of the family had ceased at Snitterfield about three miles to the north. It seems practically certain that Richard Shakespeare of that village had three sons, Thomas, Henry and John. Thomas was a farmer on rather a large scale, but very little is known about him. The career of Henry has been more fully traced by Halliwell-Phillipps, Mrs. Stopes and others, but neither of these uncles of the poet seem to count much in the story of his life. John, however, who was the poet's father, is an important figure in the Stratford scene. Concerning him a considerable amount of material is to be found in the local records, though some of it is difficult to understand, and has by various commentators been very variously interpreted.

In 1552 he was one of three of the inhabitants who were fined for allowing dunghills to accumulate in front of their houses. Most of the townsmen of any substance kept pigs, cows, ducks or other animals near to their dwellings, especially in the outskirts of the town, for the complete dependence of the people on shops and tradesmen which now prevails was then quite unknown. For food supplies they were, to a great extent, self-supporting, and all but the poorer sort were, no matter what was their chief occupation, more or less

¹ Since the above was written, Dr. Leslie Hotson has found traces at the Record Office of two other John Shakespeares earlier than this.

farmers. Some were real farmers; for a farmer who had not the luxury of a moat round his house found it safer to live in a town.¹ In Henley Street, which since 1294 had been so called because it led out of the town towards Henley-in-Arden, the roadway would be a track down the centre; and on the irregular stretches of greensward at the sides it was convenient, but not lawful, to deposit logs and also the scrapings of the pens and styes, together with garden refuse and other rubbish, till it could be carted to the fields or, what was more usual, to certain fixed spots where it was allowed to be thrown. These public muck-heaps were, at intervals, sold by the Corporation, and it is probable that John Shakespeare having some land at Ington only about one and a half miles along the Warwick Road, had intended to cart his "sterquinarium" to his own fields, but being pounced upon before he had removed it, was one of the three who were fined 12d. each. Twelve pence suggests that John could pay a substantial fine.

Halliwell-Phillipps says that John Shakespeare of Ington could not have been the John of Henley Street, because "Joannes Shakespeare of Yngton was buried the XXV of September 1589" in the parish of Hampton Lucy, and the other John not until 1601 at Stratford.²

Mrs. C. C. Stopes showed, however, that the entry was not "Joannes" but "Jeames," which probably referred to "Jeames son of Henry Shakespeare of Ington,"³ whose baptism is recorded in the same register in 1585, and there is no further entry concerning him.⁴ Mrs. Stopes continues: "If John of Henley Street may be considered the same as John of Ington, he must also be considered to be the same as the John Agricola of Snitterfield, who, in conjunction with Nicols, was granted administration of his father, Richard's, goods in 1561."⁵ More-

¹ *Outlines*, 1890 edition, vol. ii, p. 252.

² Ib.

³ Part of Henry's farm was at Ington, but as there are three Ingons not far apart its exact locality is uncertain.

⁴ *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 62.

⁵ John retained for a few months an interest in his father's farm, and was held responsible for the hedges there (*View of Frankpledge*, October 1561, printed in Dugdale Society), which would account for his being called Agricola of Snitterfield.

over, in 1581, when the Mayowes contested the claims of the Ardens to the Snitterfield land, John Shakespeare and Henry his brother were summoned as witnesses for the Ardens before the Commission appointed at Stratford.¹

The earlier portion of his career is fairly simple, if we disregard the gossip and the unauthenticated traditions, and only rely on the recorded facts, such for instance as are concisely given by Mrs. Stopes in her book called *Shakespeare's Family*.² On page 60 she says, "Nothing is recorded of John for the next few years, but he seems to have prospered in business. In a lawsuit of 1556 with Thomas Siche of Arscot he was styled a glover. In that year he bought from George Turner a freehold tenement in Greenhill Street with gardens and croft, and from Edward West a freehold tenement and gardens in Henley Street, the eastern half of the Birthplace messuage. Each of these was held by the payment of sixpence a year to the Lord of the Manor, and suit of court. Whether he had previously lived in this eastern tenement, or in the western half as a tenant, has not been absolutely decided. He was summoned on the court of Record Jury this year, and was party to several small suits, in all of which he was successful. In 1557 he was elected Aletaster, and, curiously enough, he was amerced for not keeping his gutters clean, in company with Francis Harbage, chief Bailiff, Adrian Quyney, Mr. Hall, and Mr. Clopton. He is believed to have married Mary Arden in 1557. The registers of Aston Cantlow, where it is likely that Mary was married, do not begin so early. She was single at the time of her father's death in 1556, and on September 15, 1558, 'Jone Shakes. daughter to John Shakespeare was christened at Stratford by Roger Divos, minister.'³ In 1558 John Shakespeare was elected one of the four Constables of the town, and in 1559 one of the affeerors or officers appointed to determine the imposition of small arbitrary fines.

"In 1561 he was elected one of the Chamberlains as well as one of the affeerors. He remained Chamberlain for two years,

¹ *Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 63.

² John Aubrey, in his *Brief Lives*, said that the poet's father was a butcher, but as to that, see page 292, where I have explained how Aubrey was misled.

³ Stratford on Avon Baptismal Register.

and apparently so well did he discharge his financial duties in that office that he was called on to assist later Chamberlains in making up their accounts. It is generally supposed that he could not write, because in attesting documents he made his mark. But I am not sure that this habit is a certain sign of his ignorance of the art. Camden himself chose a mark as a signature based on his horoscope (see his letter to Ortelius, September 14, 1577)."

COULD JOHN SHAKESPEARE WRITE?

This illiterate Alderman theory has always seemed to me a very difficult thing to believe. In July 1565 John Shakespeare was elected an Alderman. In September 1568 he became High Bailiff, and was described as Justice of the Peace and Bailiff of the Town, and in a town of the sixteenth century, the Bailiff had many duties which we in the twentieth know but little about. Various Acts of Parliament had to be enforced, and new Acts had to be studied. There were numerous travellers passing through the town, most of whom had to carry licences;¹ some were licences to beg, others to hawk goods or to lead bears. Minstrels and musicians, players, "goinge in or about any Countrey within this Realme, without sufficient Authoritye deryved from or under our Soveraigne Ladie the Queene," might appear at any time. There were messengers from towns that had suffered from fires, who had written authority to ask for help in rebuilding them; maimed soldiers and escaped prisoners from Turkey or Sallee; also rogues and vagabonds with forged credentials.² An illiterate Bailiff would fall an easy prey to such rascals and he would continually be liable to great humiliation and annoyances. Instead of having to make appeal to the first person he could

¹ In a village the parish constables and the churchwardens could deal with such, but in a town the constables were responsible to the bailiff.

² In a *History of Warwick and Its People*, the late Mr. T. Kemp, quoting from *The Book of John Fisher the Bailiff*, says: "From all parts of England came people whose room was better than their company. . . . The drunkard, the thief, the cut-purse, the horse dealer, the horse stealer, the man with a false passport, the brawler and the common vagrant were all frequently represented before the Bailiff and gave accounts of their lives," p. 24. John Fisher was a well-educated man.

find who was able to read and write—a grammar-school boy for instance—it would have been much easier to master the art himself. The Corporation Minutes, Transactions, Account Rolls, etc., were full of detail and were elaborately kept and recorded. They were not recorded for our benefit, but for the use of the men who were governing the town and yet, to the Bailiff and twelve of the burgesses did they mean absolutely nothing, no more than the tracks of a spider that had crawled through a blob of ink? Are we to believe that all these elaborate accounts, the notes of the councils and their deliberations, the meetings, the decisions and proceedings of the Corporation, were only the secret monopoly of the Town Clerk and a few of the burgesses who could read?

MARKS AS SIGNATURES

One can hardly accept such an unsatisfactory conclusion as that, nor can we ignore it.

It seems, therefore, that we must take the plunge into what is little better than a dark labyrinth of uncertainty and conjecture, in which the few sources of light are elusive gleams quivering over treacherous bogs, Will-o'-the-Wisps, Friar's Lanterns, false flames to delude the investigator and lead him astray; in which the only sound and trustworthy paths are narrow, uninviting, circuitous, and easily missed.

In other words, we have to wrestle with the problem of the mark as a signature.

Halliwell-Phillipps dashed boldly in; taking a very short cut as Malone and others had done before him, and was very soon out on the other side, quite under the impression that he had explored and mapped out the whole area. Sir Sidney Lee ventured a short distance into the maze, saying, in an early edition of his *Life of Shakespeare*, "Good ground is here offered for the belief that the poet's father wielded a practised pen." And again, "When attesting documents he occasionally made his mark, but there is evidence in the Stratford archives that he could write, with facility."¹ In the later edition, printed 1915, in place of those statements, he says that John Shake-

¹ Page 4.

speare "when attesting documents, like many of his educated neighbours, made his mark, and there is no unquestioned specimen of his handwriting in the Stratford archives; but his financial aptitude and ready command of figures satisfactorily relieve him of the imputation of illiteracy. The municipal accounts, which were checked by tallies and counters, were audited by him after he ceased to be Chamberlain, and he more than once advanced small sums of money to the Corporation."¹

This at first sounds fairly convincing, but it gives no proof that John Shakespeare could write, and it is not supported by any trace of evidence. Sir Sidney gives not a single reference; it is all based on the statements of Halliwell-Phillipps, who was regarded as the greatest authority on that subject. The only evidence of John's financial aptitude in the Stratford documents is that he became one of the two Borough Chamberlains, but whether he did the necessary work with ease or with difficulty the documents do not say. There is nothing about the accounts being "checked," nothing about "tallies," not a word about "counters," nor about the accounts being "audited" by John Shakespeare. He is stated to have *made* the accounts, so how could he also have been asked to audit them?

It has long been taken for granted that because no writing of John Shakespeare's has ever been identified, and because on the documents that bear his name he signed with a cross, he could not have been able to write. Moreover, when recording his presence at meetings of the Stratford Town Council he placed a different mark, which some writers think was meant to resemble a pair of glover's compasses, in the column where the Clerk or his deputy has afterwards placed a row of names.

EDUCATED PEOPLE MADE MARKS

The majority of the more reckless statements that Halliwell-Phillipps made about the early life of Shakespeare, the bookless neighbourhood, the total absence of even the A B C, etc., are given in the *Outlines* without evidence or attempt at proof;

¹ Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, 1915, p. 6.

but in stating that the poet's parents were both absolutely illiterate, he relied on the fact that they attested documents by making a mark; and in this belief he shared the recorded opinion of Malone, and various other biographers, who had made similar assertions.

The justification of these statements depends entirely upon the assumption that, in the sixteenth century, nobody who was able to write would under any circumstances be likely to make a mark. This, however, is a very rash thing to assume; the fact being that in past times instances are not uncommon in which men and women who could write made marks instead of signing their names. Here are some examples, but they are only odd instances which I have happened to come across without looking for them. It should also be remembered that none of those who have recorded them were thinking of John Shakespeare, or had any Shakespearean axe to grind.

Even Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps would admit that a clerk must be able to write, or he could not be a clerk. The Dictionary says, "Clerk, a scholar, a man of letters, a clergyman, a man employed under another as a writer."¹ Mr. W. G. Fretton, a learned antiquary, in an account of the Fullers Company at Coventry, says, "The office of Clerk is always an important one in the old guilds, in some instances he was a member of the fraternity, in others a paid servant." In 1740 Mr. Fretton notes that "Mr. Wm. Spicer, Clerk to the above Company, signed the minutes of his subordinate's appointment with his mark."²

In a book by Mr. E. A. Barnard, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S., called *Stanton and Snowshill*, two villages about fifteen miles from Stratford on Avon, he mentions an agreement of about 1634 between two brothers, Henry Izod, Rector of Stanton, and John Izod his brother, relating to land and tithes owned by Henry. "The agreement is signed by Henry Izod—that most ardent of Churchmen and Royalists—in his large and stately hand, and his brother John makes a mark. This seems at first sight a curious fact, Henry Izod a Master of Arts; his brother

¹ N.E.D.

² *Transactions of Birmingham Archaeological Society*, p. 41.

only able to make his mark. But I have long since ceased to regard the making of a mark, at any rate in the seventeenth century, as indicating illiteracy, for, to take Stanton as an example, there are at least several instances that at once come to mind, in various legal deeds connected with property in the village, wherein men sometimes made their marks, and at other times wrote their names. John Izod was one of these, for there is ample evidence that he really could write his name. One might hazard several reasons why this should have been so, and they might all be wrong. The fact remains, however."¹

In *The Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester*, by John Noake, is the following: "Attesting signatures by marks was a common practice in the Middle Ages among all classes and even with the clergy. In most cases it was rendered compulsory by the general inability to write, but this was not to be taken as a rule, for many who could write fell into the practice of making their mark."

In Tuer's *History of the Horn-book* he writes, "In early times the cross pledged the person making it by his faith as a Christian to the truth of what he signed, but its use by no means indicated illiteracy. In later days 'John Smith his mark +' was the common method of signing by high and low."²

Lord Campbell, in *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements*: "In my own experience I have known many instances of documents bearing a mark as the signature of persons who could write well."³

Why men who could write should have made marks is difficult to tell and especially when they did it more than three hundred years ago. But in the matter of signing deeds the problem is not so mysterious. I am told by lawyers that signatures were not necessary and that even at this day the vital attestation is to say in the presence of witnesses "I deliver this as my act and deed." Even the witnesses need not to sign so long as their names appear in the deed as witnesses.

While pondering these things I looked up a volume of extracts from *The Black Book of Warwick*, an Elizabethan

¹ Pages 71 and 72.

² Page 63.

³ Page 15.

manuscript edited by the late Thomas Kemp,¹ in which I knew was a photograph of some signatures and marks which occur at folio 11b in the original book (here shown at Figs. 50 and 51). It has the names of four members of the Warwick Corporation on the left, which are obviously signatures, and on the right the *marks* of five others. The occasion was the election of Richard Roo to be Bailiff. Halliwell-Phillipps would have said that these five burgesses could not write their own names, and it must be admitted that the names were written for them, as they are all in the same handwriting. But as there is another illustration with signatures of Warwick burgesses in the book, I looked to see if any instance occurred of one of these "marks-men" writing his name.

The meeting was an important one, "At whiche daie thole Company as well the bailief as the more p'te of the xij principall Burgesses being assembled in their comon hall to receive thacompt of Daniel haylye Bailief for the past year." The result was signed by twelve burgesses, and *four of the "marks-men" were among them*. Moreover, the fifth was not present, so that he also may have been able to write.

On the first sheet the names (as was usual in formal documents) are in Latin. At the first mark (in Fig. 50) is written "Signū I Johis Butler," a contracted version of "Signum Johannis Butler," and it will be seen that the signature on (Fig. 52) folio 9a is "by me John Butler." Again, below his mark is that of Thome Barret, the Clerk's translation of Thomas Barret. In *signing* his name, Barret put in front of it what looks like the word "by," but this appears to be crossed out, as though he had begun to write "by me" but had changed his mind. Again, "Johis dyche" under a mark which is something like a tennis racket has only a distant resemblance to the flowing lines of the John Dyche of folio 9a, and the Johis Nason written by the Clerk outside the boundary line of 11b is very different to the John Nason of folio 9a.

As the signatures in Kemp's book are on a small scale, I obtained permission to see the manuscript itself and take the photographs.

¹ Mr. Kemp does not comment on these illustrations except to say that the marks are very curious. The MS. is dated September 9, 1563.

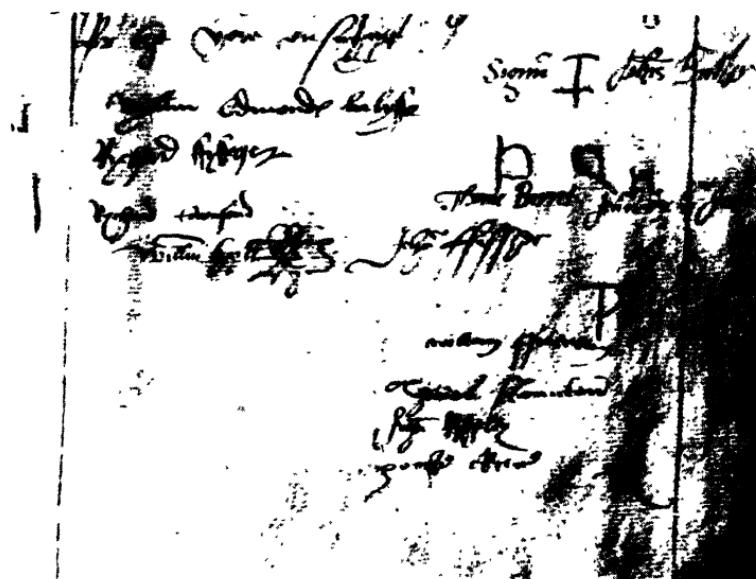


FIG. 50.—Folio 11b, *Black Book of Warwick*

MARK-MAKING IN NORTHUMBERLAND

There are, however, instances in which making a mark is stated to have been due to the "marks-man" not being able to write. There is, for instance, a passage in Raine's *History of North Durham*,¹ quoting a document dated 1561, which gives "the names of the Lords and Freeholders, Tenants, and Inhabitants within the county of Northumberland that have consented and agreed to the Execution of the Article conteyned in this Booke, according to the tenor of the same; and for the testimony thereof, such of them as can write have hereunto subscribed their names; and such others as cannot write have hereunto set their markes, and caused their names hereafter to be written." So the marks were made first and the names written afterwards.

In quoting this extract in *Notes and Queries*, Miss Mabel Peacocke, in July 1879, says, there are 146 names appended, the greater part of them certainly persons of gentle blood; of these ninety-three "have hereunto set their markes." This certainly shows a remarkable state of illiteracy on the borders of Scotland, but one has to remember the terrible condition of affairs that had prevailed in those regions owing to incessant raids and border feuds down to the time of James I. This very document describes the chaotic conditions then prevailing, and was an "Order taken in the second year of Elizabeth for fortifying the Border." It says that castles, towers and villages were in great ruin, and that all roads were to be made as narrow and crooked as they could be, so that an enemy might be annoyed at every step and his progress made as difficult as possible, because of the continual murders, robberies, pillages, etc. One can believe that the Lords, Freeholders and Tenants found that the ability to fight was all important, and that fighters were wanted more than writers.

In 1580 at Brighton, then called Brighthelmstone, a manuscript written on parchment, and called "The Book of all the Ancient Customs,"² was signed by the principal inhabitants,

¹ 1852, p. xxxii.

² Printed in *The History of Brighthelmstone*, by John Ackerson Esredge, 1862.

of whom seven wrote their names and seventy-three signed with a mark. It has been supposed, therefore, that there were only seven people who could write in the whole town! (See marks at Fig. 53.) Was, then, Elizabethan Brighthelmstone no better educated than the wilds of the Scottish Border? There seems to be no further evidence on the subject, but when one examines the photograph of the document in question it is obvious that the marks are elaborate, and surprisingly well drawn, especially as all must have been made with a quill or a reed pen. The inference is that men who could draw such marks could draw letters.

MARKS IN STRATFORD RECORDS

In studying the Stratford records it appeared to me that some of them, on which members of the Corporation had signed without writing their names, bear marks which indicate, not so much illiteracy, but a certain amount of skill with the pen. Writing, after all, is a kind of drawing, and some of the municipal papers in the Birthplace show marks both simple and elaborate, together with initials so easily and excellently drawn that one cannot avoid the inference that the authors of them were quite capable of writing their names if they had wished. Isaac Hitchcokes, for example, signed with a bold and flowing y in script.¹ Thomas Walker made a printed T and an interlaced double V so cleverly drawn that it seems incredible that he should not have been able to write. Sure enough, lower down the page is his clearly written signature "Thomas Walker."

In Malone's *Shakespeare*, edited by Boswell, he says that "on the 29th of January 1588-9, of twenty-seven persons who signed a paper in the Council-chamber of Stratford, fourteen made their marks and among the marksmen are found Mr. Wm. Wilson the high Bailiff and four of the Aldermen."² But a page or two later he says, "Such however was the change, and so great the improvement in this respect in a short period that about eight years afterwards, out of twenty-

¹ *Stratford on Avon Records*, fol. 236.

² Edited by James Boswell, 1821, vol. ii, pp. 987-98.

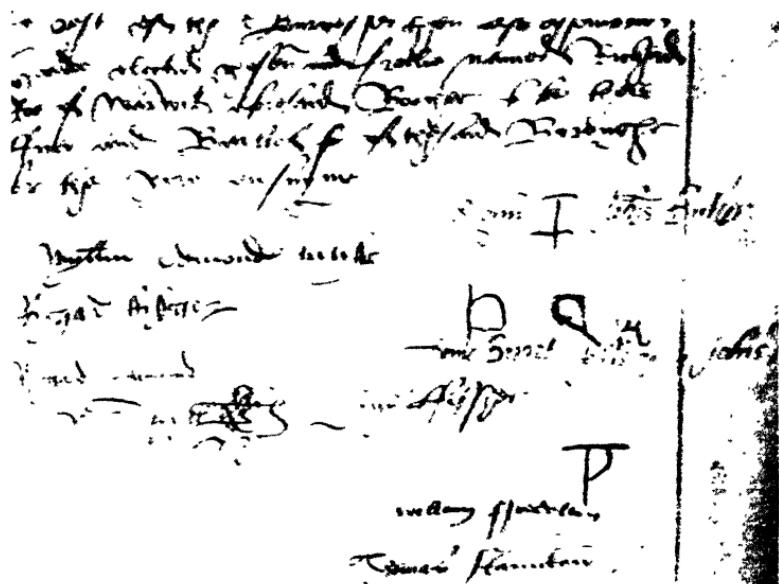


FIG. 51.—Folio 11b, *Black Book of Warwick*

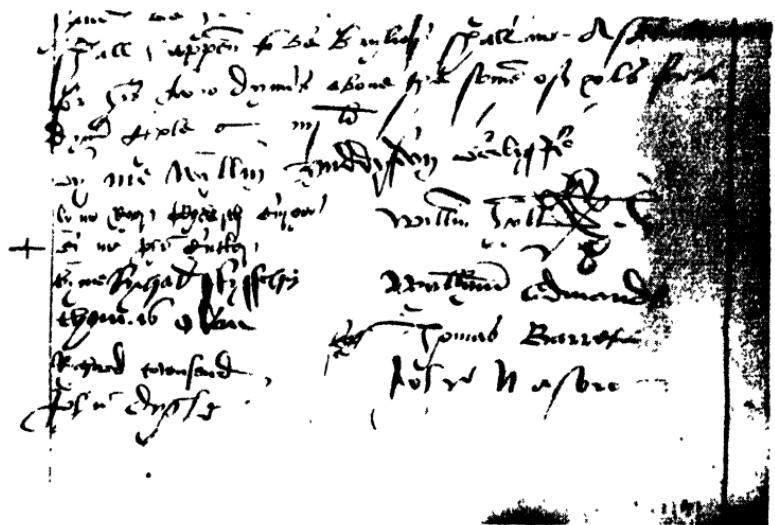


FIG. 52.—Folio 9a, *Black Book of Warwick*

eight persons who sanctioned another paper on the 9th of January, 1597 (including all the Aldermen and burgesses of Stratford), seven only were marksmen; and of nineteen persons whose signatures are affixed to an order, made on the seventh of Sept. 1598, six only do not subscribe their names."

Malone's words would seem to suggest that in the interval there had been an astonishing advance in the popular education at Stratford, as though some compulsory education authority had swooped upon the town and converted the ignorant Town Councillors into scholars who could read and write. This we know could not possibly have occurred, and the more probable explanation is that the idea of their ignorance is a mistake. In the case of Adrian Quiney whose mark is a nearly circular flourish (shown in facsimile opposite page 134 in the first volume of the Dugdale Society) there can be no possible doubt, because there are several letters that he wrote still in existence.¹

What, then, do these "marks" indicate? The hasty assumption of Malone and others, that they mean gross ignorance on the part of a majority of the Stratford Corporation, is evidently wrong.

In order to throw any light on the subject one has to go back to the Middle Ages, when the sign of the cross was a symbol of exceptional solemnity and imparted to the attestation a religious significance. For example, in 1403 Alice de Streeton, in making a vow of chastity, wrote, "and yn tokyn y^r of wyth myn owne hand I make yis signe +."² There is every reason to suppose that making the sign of the cross at the foot of a document was regarded long after the Reformation as a specially solemn and binding method of signing a document. Only about fifty years before that great upheaval the form of profession of three novices to the Nunnery of Ruper ends: "Et quelibet earum fecit tale signum crucis manu sua propria +."³ If they were ordered to sign with a cross it seems to suggest that they could have written their names.

Bearing strictly upon this subject, there is a considerable

¹ They are printed in *Master Richard Quiney*, E. I. Fripp, pp. 144 and 145.

² Surtees Society, *Test. Ebor.*, vol. 45, p. 318.

³ *Sussex Archaeo. Coll.* v, p. 256.

array of facts in a very learned paper by Professor Charles Sisson on "Marks as Signatures" printed in the *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* for June 1928. It discusses marks from the earliest known English example in a charter of Hlodari of Kent, dated A.D. 674, down to the seventeenth century; and not only English marks for signatures, but pottery marks as far back as six thousand years B.C., which, for the searcher after Shakespearean evidence, rather complicates the subject.

The article is headed by the passage from the second part of *King Henry VI*, in which Jack Cade says to the Clerk of Chatham: "Dost thou use to write thy name, or hast thou a mark to thyself, like an honest plain-dealing man?" and the Clerk replies: "Sir, I thank God, I have been so well brought up, that I can write my name." And the mob shouts, "He hath confessed. Away with him!"

The Professor's comment on this is as follows:

"As usual, Shakespeare has something pretty sound to say on the subject of this paper as upon most subjects and it is pleasant to be able not only to invoke his auspices, but to confirm the general view concerning marks that is suggested in these lines." If we are to take in its literal sense "the general view concerning marks that is suggested in these lines," it would appear that the majority of Shakespeare's biographers were justified in assuming that the parents of the poet could not read or write, and that the making of a mark necessarily meant the inability to write.

But the scene from Shakespeare is only partially quoted, and Jack Cade had much to say which has some bearing on this subject. When the Clerk of Chatham is brought in, his captors say, "he can write and read and cast account."

CADE O, monstrous!

SMITH We took him setting of boys' copies.

CADE Here's a villain.

SMITH Has a book in his pocket with red letters in't.

CADE Nay, then he is a conjuror.

DICK Nay, he can make obligations and write court-hand.

CADE I am sorry for't: the man is a proper man, on mine honour: unless I find him guilty, he shall not die—Come hither, sirrah, I must examine thee: what is thy name?

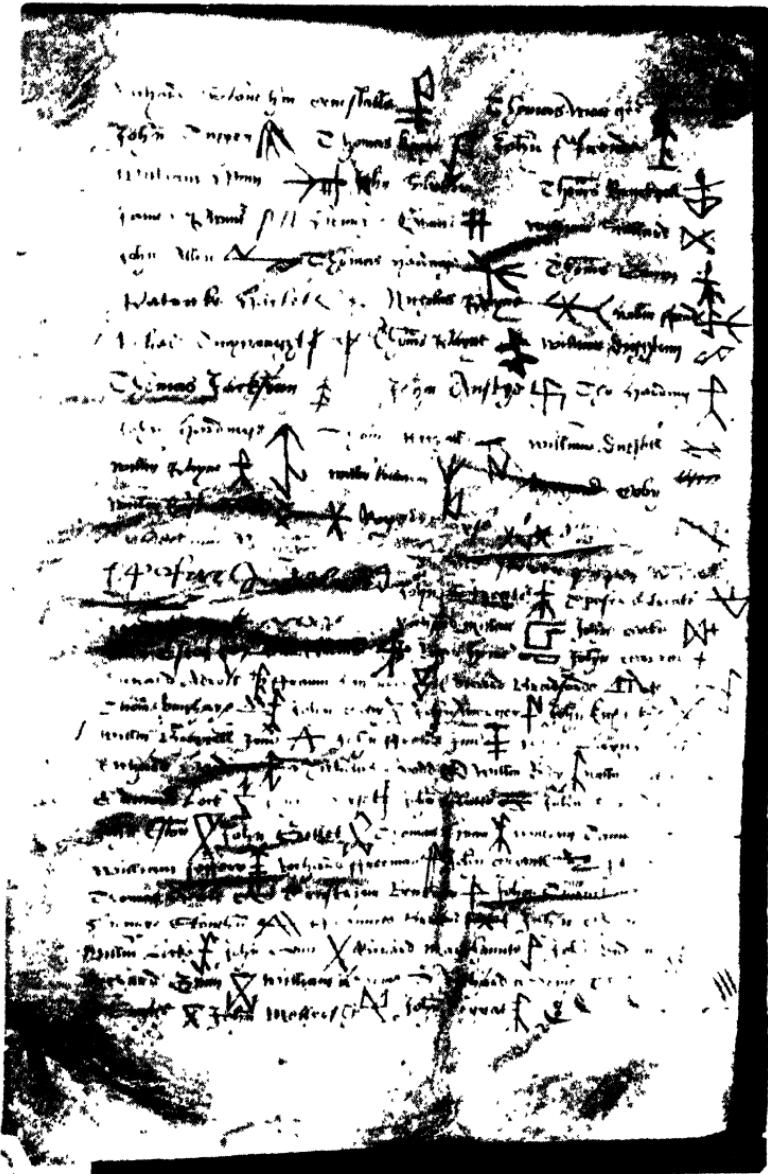


FIG. 53.—Brighton manuscript, showing marks written by the chief inhabitants

CLERK Emmanuel.

DICK They used to write it on the top of letters: 't will go hard with you.

CADE Let me alone. Dost thou use to write thy name? or hast thou a mark to thyself like an honest plain-dealing man?

CLERK Sir, I thank God, I have been so well brought up that I can write my name.

ALL He hath confessed: away with him! He's a villain and a traitor.

CADE Away with him I say! hang him with his pen and ink-horn about his neck.

This scene is followed by another (Sc. 7) in which Jack Cade addresses Lord Say: "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm, in erecting a grammar-school; and whereas, before, our fore-fathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou has caused printing to be used; and, contrary to the king, his crown, and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill."

But were these passages ever intended to be taken literally, or were not they conceived in the spirit of topsy-turvydom, with which the late W. S. Gilbert made us so familiar in later times? There is a great deal of this upside-down Gilbertian caricaturing of real life in these scenes, by which the author contrived to get the "comic relief" demanded by a play which would otherwise have been an unbroken succession of horrors and tragedies. Shakespeare was sometimes lavish with that sort of relief, and was not at all careful to make it consistent so long as it appealed to his audience in the desired way.

They all knew that the ability to write and read would give a convicted criminal "benefit of clergy" and so save his neck. Therefore to hang one man for setting of boys' copies and being able to read and write, and another for having built a grammar school, would greatly appeal to their sense of the ridiculous, especially when his ink-horn and penner were hung about his neck, for they were used to seeing malefactors in the pillory with the implement associated with their crimes hung round their necks.¹

To take these Jack Cade episodes, and the buffoonery of his

¹ See many instances in Riley's *Memorials of London*.

rabble of followers literally, as they are written, with the solemnity with which the Professor accepts them, is to misinterpret them. They are an uproarious burlesque of a real trial. Medicval and sometimes Elizabethan audiences, being familiar with the representation of a comic Satan, accompanied by much tomfoolery, and greatly delighted by a boisterously raging Herod, who not only raged on the platform but also raged in the street,¹ would find a bloodthirsty and at the same time comic mob very much to their taste.

In the time of Jack Cade and of William Shakespeare there was a very powerful incentive to education which does not exist now, namely, the law that allowed a man accused of a capital offence to claim "benefit of clergy." If he could prove that he was not illiterate by reading what had come to be called his "neck-verse," that is, a Latin verse (usually the beginning of the fifty-first Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness," etc.), he was only burnt in the hand and set at liberty, thus saving his neck.²

I may also point out that the real Jack Cade could read and write, for documents still exist that are in his handwriting. Also Shakespeare's Jack Cade could read, because when he says, "I fear neither sword nor fire," and Smith the Weaver says, "He need not fear the sword for his coat is of proof," Dick the Butcher rejoins, "But methinks he should stand in fear of fire, being burnt i' the hand for stealing of sheep." Therefore he must at least have been able to read his "neck-verse," otherwise if he had been found guilty of sheep-stealing he would certainly have been hanged.

The Professor continues, "No survey of the subject can fail to observe the conflict between the antiquity and dignity of the mark and the newfangled qualification for gentry or respectability by literacy which emerged at the end of the Middle Ages."

This extract and several subsequent passages seem to suggest that the author of the paper agrees with those who believe that

¹ "Here Erode ragis in the Pagond and in the strete also."—Thomas Sharp, *Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries, anciently performed at Coventry*, 1825, p. 107.

² "Within forty foot of the gallows, conning his neck-verse."—*The Jew of Malta: Old Plays*, vol. viii, p. 368.

a man who signed with a mark did so because he was illiterate, and that this was so, not only in modern times but also in the long-distant past. On the other hand, he traces with a great number of deeply interesting instances and illustrations the history of mark-making to times before and since the cross was a Christian symbol; and though in some of the instances that he gives there is a definite statement that the cross is a substitute for a written signature on account of the subscriber's illiteracy,¹ there are other cases in which it is evident that the cross was used as a *sanctifying symbol* and, as Professor Sisson himself says, "reinforces the deed of a literate testator, or serves as an invocation."² Again he says, "But how came people to set marks at all, and how came the cross to be so accepted? It is clear that we have here two separate and originally divergent streams of custom. This will be more evident when we consider that there are, even up to Stuart days, men who can write and yet occasionally make a cross in lieu of signature. And from the later Middle Ages onwards the cross and other marks unrelated to the cross are used widely as signatures by various individuals of the same people at one time."¹

All this, however, seems to upset and nullify the inferences with which the Professor begins his paper and most of those which are suggested at the end of it. His comments would lead us to feel that one can take it for granted that the person who makes a mark (John Shakespeare, for example) was illiterate.

There are other passages in Professor Sisson's paper which bear upon the subject. He says on page 9, for instance, that in a charter of 1090 a list of expected witnesses was prepared before completion, and that "crosses precede only certain of the names, and they appear to be autograph." It seems that those actually present attested by making the mark themselves. He also says (page 11): "It is used as a sign of presence by clerks in Courts of Law. In Tudor and Stuart Town Dispositions of the Courts of Chancery, the fly-leaf of records of evidence often bears a list of witnesses to be interrogated. Square crosses are placed before the names of those who actually came and whose evidence is contained in the book."

In a footnote on page 22 the Professor says, "The case is

¹ Page 3.

² Page 5.

cited by Mr. Jenkinson in his *The Later Court Hands in England*, page 90 n., of William Stallenge, a servant of James I, who in 1609 signs his name under his account, and in 1612 is content with a cross. I have some doubt whether the cross is autograph in this case, or in any case where a person known to be capable of a signature is found making a mark unaccompanied by any writing. I wonder if John Shakespeare ever really wrote his name himself. He could quite well have been Bailiff at Stratford without being able to write, just as various parish priests were apparently illiterate (Plate I, 1 and 3)." As to William Stallenge, there is no need to hesitate or demur at his making a cross, when in the same manner (as the Professor's paper clearly shows) so many people who were probably or certainly literate might, and often did, draw a cross with their pen, instead of writing their name. So far as John Shakespeare is concerned, I think that I can show that he could not have been either Bailiff or Chamberlain of Stratford without a good knowledge of the "three R's." And, further, that he had that knowledge at his finger-ends, and as for parish priests being illiterate the idea seemed to me quite incredible. However, I looked up the first crosses on Plate I of the Professor's paper and found that No. 1 was made by Thomas Hytches, Curate of Knight's Washbourne, Worcestershire, in 1552. Also that No. 3 was made in the same year by John Browne, Vicar of Overbury, near by in the same county. Referring to a reprint of the First Prayer Book of King Edward VI, I turned to the page containing the "Fourme and Maner of Orderinge of Deacons." In the Preface I found that the Bishop, finding a candidate "learned in the Latyne tongue, and suffientlye instructed in holye Scripture maye upon a Sunday or Holyday etc." admit him a Deacon. In the "Manner of Ordering of Deacons," the first words of the Bishop are, "Take hede that the persones whom ye present unto us, be apte and mete for *their learninge* and godlye conversations, to exercyse their ministereye duely."

Edward VI was on the throne from 1547 till 1553, and his First Prayer Book having been issued in 1549, it seemed possible that John Browne might have been instituted to the living before the Prayer Book of 1549 was drawn up. I therefore

wrote to the Vicar of Overbury and asked him if anything was known as to the John Browne who was Vicar there in 1552 and as to Thomas Hytches who was Curate at Knight's Washbourne in the same year. The Vicar very promptly replied that on a list of incumbents that hangs in the Church and goes back to the twelfth century, "Joannes Browne A.M." was instituted on the 24th of February, 1545. This, of course, was before the reign of Edward VI, but as John Browne was a Master of Arts, even Halliwell-Phillipps would admit that he could write. There is no evidence of any crosses before any Vicar's signature, but in 1571 Galfridus Lewes was S.T.B. (*Sanctae Theologiae Baccalaureus*), so he was certainly not an illiterate parish priest. Knight's Washbourne, also known as Little Washbourne, has an ancient church, but there are no records which throw any light on the career of Thomas Hytches.

THE CHAMBERLAIN'S ACCOUNTS

The Dugdale Society, in their first volume, printed on page 120: "Thaccount of John tayler & John Shakspeyr Chamburlens," which is stated to have been made January 24, 1562-3.

On page 126 is the "Account of John tayler and John Shakspeyr chamburlens made" January 10, 1563-4.

Again, on page 137 is "Thacompt of William tylor & William smythe chamburlens mde by John Shakspeyr & John taylor" March 21, 1564-5.

On page 148, "Thacompt of Willm tylor & Willm Smythe Chamburlens made by John Shakspeyr" February 15, 1555-6.

All these Accounts are stated by the editors to be in the handwriting of Richard Symons, the Town Clerk.

As the accounts were made in 1562-3 by John Taylor, they would be made by his colleague, John Shakespeare, the next time, so for three years in succession the poet's father "made" the accounts, and in two of those years he made them, when in the ordinary routine they should have been made by the Borough Chamberlains.

The last account was presented late, and John Shakespeare

had apparently taken on the work because of complications incident to the Plague. It has under "Money receved" such entries as "Item, rec. of Jone Walcar of sullyhull Xs." "Item rec. of Mr Cawdrey for the Hous in Henley stret XXIIjs iiijd." Altogether there are seventeen items. Under "Money —forty-nine entries—payd upon receyt" are such items as "payd for takynge downe ye rood loft in ye Chapell LJs." Under "alowances" there are eleven items, such as "In primis for burfordes hous XVJs." If Master Shakespeare could not write down these items as they were paid or received or allowed, why was he credited with having made the accounts?

The oath of the Aldermen and burgesses, John Shakespeare might have learnt by heart if a Grammar School boy had read it to him half a dozen times; but to discharge himself of all the rents of the land belonging to the town, and of all the other money that should come into his hands belonging to the commonalty, and to yield up a true account thereof unto the auditors assigned at the end of his year of office; and in addition, to render a statement of every small and great sum of money that the Chamberlains had spent; I think an illiterate Chamberlain could not have done, and would not even have attempted; and yet all that he had sworn to do when on October 3, 1561, he and John Taylor the Shearman took the oath as Chamberlains.

Of his work as Borough Chamberlain, Halliwell-Phillipps has the following comment in his celebrated *Outlines*¹: "In March, 1565, John Shakespeare with the assistance of his former colleague in the same office, made up the accounts of the Chamberlains of the borough for the year ending at the previous Michaelmas. Neither of these worthies could even write their own names, but nearly all tradesmen then reckoned with counters, the results on important occasions being entered by professional scriveners. The poet's father seems to have been an adept in the former kind of work, for in February 1566, having been elected an alderman in the previous summer, he individually superintended the making up of the accounts of the Chamberlains for the preceding official year."

No doubt Halliwell-Phillipps honestly believed that John

¹ Vol. i, pp. 33-5.

could not write his own name, yet the flimsy and ambiguous suggestions with which he slurred over an awkward problem will not bear examination. The system of reckoning with counters was found convenient when the medieval method of account-keeping continued to use the old Roman numerals, and had not adopted the Arabic figures which we use now. To add up figures under those conditions must have been a tiresome business, possibly John Shakespeare may have resorted to counters in reckoning sums of money, but counters could not be made to do the work that was expected from the Chamberlains.

Even if John Shakespeare did reckon with counters the accounts could not have been "made" in that way; and the results could not have been entered by scriveners unless the scriveners had been present at the counting. Scriveners were expensive people to employ, for their chief work was the engrossing of deeds.¹ They would have had to be paid and their charges shown in the accounts. There is no probability that the Chamberlains who accepted twenty shillings for their work would themselves have paid a scrivener to write down results while they shuffled counters about on a chequer-board, and there is no trace of the payment of scriveners in the accounts and no probability of their having anything whatever to do with the accounts, especially as the Ordinances of their Guild ordered them "to set their names" to the documents they made, so that it should be known whose work they were.²

Moreover, the Aldermen and Capital Burgesses of Stratford were forbidden under heavy penalties "to dysclos nor declare furthe of ye Councell chamber any woordes or dedes spoken or done in the Councell chamber vnto any other personnes but only thos personnes yt be of the Councell vnder ye payne of

¹ In *Prior More's Journal* are many items that were paid to scriveners. "In 1520 payd to Richard Skryvenar for wrytyng of a New masbooke 4*£* 2*s.*, with volume 2*2s.* 5*d.*, byce, & florisshing of ye hoole boke—ye makynge of gylt letters 18*s.* Summa 122*s.* 5*d.*" (Page 99.) Byce was a strong blue colour.

² Hazlitt, *Livery Cos. of London*, p. 615. It is not unusual to find in the bottom corner of an old document the name of the scrivener who engrossed it.

euer person so offendyng etc."¹ This rule in itself would be sufficient to prevent the calling in of outside help of any sort or kind.

Then, after all, reckoning is only a part of making the accounts. Without pen and ink, counters could not record anything; and there is nothing about superintending the accounts in the Council Book: "superintended" is pure Halliwell-Phillipps, not Richard Symonds, and how a man who could not read should be able to superintend the work of literate officials one would like to know.

In *Cymbeline*, the Gaoler says to Posthumus: "O, the charity of a penny cord² . . . of what's past, is & to come, the discharge:—your neck, sir, is pen, book, and counters; so the acquittance follows."³ This seems to show that Shakespeare considered that in using counters, a pen and a book were necessary to write down the result.

In *The Winter's Tale*, the Clown, when he wants to know "what comes the wool to," says, "I cannot do't without Compters."⁴ Yet the Clown could read; he bought ballads from Autolycus and sang them with Mopsa and Dorcas.⁵

The accounts which the Stratford Chamberlains had to keep were of a primitive type, having remained almost unchanged from the Middle Ages.

The amount of each item, or group of items, was carried out to the end of the line and stated there in Roman numerals. There were no ruled columns for pounds, shillings and pence. The total of each page was stated at the foot, and brought over. The addition of page after page of these accounts must have been a tedious and even laborious task compared to finding the sum of a number of arabic figures which had recognized places for units, tens, hundreds and thousands.

With Roman numerals there was no casting up of the units first and the tens afterwards, each item had to be added to the one next to it, and as the pence were frequently more than twelve, such sums as xviijd. or xiijd. being quite usual, the

¹ *Book of Orders*, September 29, 1557. Printed in Dugdale Society, vol. i, p. 64.

² Act V, Sc. 4.

³ The hangman's usual implement.

⁴ Act IV, Sc. 3.

⁵ Ib.

work was all the more difficult. Moreover, a halfpenny was expressed by *ob.* for obolus, and a farthing by *qd.* for quadrans.

WHAT DID THE WORD "MADE" MEAN?

The great question is this. When the Town Clerk wrote the heading,

15 February, 1565/6

"Willm. tylor & Willm. Smythe Chamburlens	Thaccompot of Willm tylor & Willm. Smythe Chamburlens made by John Shakspeyr";
---	--

what meaning did Richard Symons the Town Clerk attach to the word "made"?

Thinking this over, it occurred to me that some light might be thrown on the problem by finding out what the word meant when used in similar accounts in the days before, and during the life of John Shakespeare. I therefore turned up a collection of old accounts which have some resemblance to those of the Stratford Corporation, and were printed by the Wilts Record Society in a large volume of close print called *Church-wardens' Account of St Edmund & St Thomas, Sarum* (i.e. Salisbury), 1443-1702."

For fifty-two years the accounts of St. Edmund's had been engrossed in Latin on rolls of parchment and also written in English in a paper book called the Journal Book of the church. A number of the documents are damaged, and the earliest remaining item of expense for keeping the accounts is for the year 1473. "It. in the makynge and wrytnge of this accownte Vs."¹ In the next year it is "in composing and writing" (*compositio et scriptura*),² so "making" is equivalent to "composing." In 1475 the entry is "the makynge and writynge of this Account Vs. viiid."³ In 1477, "for money paid for making and writing the present Account and for engrossing the same in the church journal Vs." (*pro denariis solutis pro factura & scriptura presentis Comp'i & de intitulacione eiusdem in Jurnal ecclesie Vs*).⁴ The next year, "and in money spent for making and Engrossing and writing (*factura ac Agrosiamento*

¹ Page 16.

² Page 18.

³ Page 20.

⁴ Page 23.

& scriptura) the present Account as well as in the Journal Book Vs."¹

In 1500, "to John Hamptone the yonger for makynge & wrytyng aswelle of the present accompte in Englisse as in a rolle of Parchment in Latyne in alle ijs. iiijd."²

There continue to be a number of statements made of the cost of the account-keeping wherever the documents are perfect. In 1534 is the item, "makynge the Boke all the yere xijd."³ but generally it is "for makynge the Account." In 1550 "paper and ynke to wryte in that we have layde owt iiijd." In 1553 "roger for makinge of ye churche account & for wrytinge off ye books for ye decon xijd."

It seems clear from the tenor of most of these items that the churchwardens kept a record with pen and ink of what they received and what they had "layde owt," and that somebody, whose name is often given, *made* a debit and credit account from these memoranda. But it was only a rough draft, and this draft or "foul copy" was afterwards copied into the church book, and also in the parchment roll. Sometimes a man—for instance, John Hampton the younger—made *and* wrote the account in English, as well as turned it into Latin and engrossed it on the parchment. On page 32 of this printed volume there is a long account in English, which is stated by the editor to be the *first draft* of the account which precedes it from March 30, 1483, to April 18, 1484, and *to be on two sheets of paper*. This "preceding account" is written in Latin on parchment, and records the same items as those of the English draft, but the names are contracted and the whole occupies less space than the English version.

On page 46 of the same volume are six lines of the account for the year April 19, 1495, to April 3, 1496, *written on paper*, and the editor says, "The rest of this roll is the same as the one given previously (p. 44). This is evidently a *rough draft* and there are a few variations." Both the draft and the fair copy are in Latin, and the variations are chiefly in the spelling. These two rough drafts have been preserved more or less by accident, but they are of great interest as showing how the various people who were entrusted with the work each year "made"

¹ Page 25.

² Page 52.

³ Page 72.

the accounts by assembling the items into a rough draft convenient to be entered as a "fair copy" in the parchment roll, sometimes by the Deacon, sometimes by the Clerk, at other times by various people who were paid for doing it. I think it will be clear to any unbiased reader of the above extracts that the various parishioners of St. Edmund's at Salisbury, who were for a number of years paid for "making" the church accounts, made them by writing out the different items, and that "making" involved being able to write.

And if more proof is necessary there is a series of similar accounts at a church only eight miles from Stratford, which were kept before, during, and after John Shakespeare's tenure of office as Chamberlain; a series which show still more convincingly that "making" meant writing—a series known as the Accounts of the Church wardens of St. Nicholas at Warwick.

In these Warwick documents the entries vary slightly (as such accounts generally do), because they were written by different people nearly every year; but the word which they used for book-keeping is most frequently "makynge." However, in the first and second year of Phillip and Mary it changes to, "It'm payd ffor *wrytyng* off thys account the whyche belongythe to the parishe ffor thys yere—xijd." The next year it is, "It'm payd to Edmunde Wryght ffor makynge off thys account xijd.," and there are several other instances of the same word. In the first year of Queen Elizabeth, however, it is "payd ffor *wrytyng* off thys Acount in thys bocke xvjd.," and again next year the word is "wrytyng," and the year after also, Edmund Wright, who on former occasions had written "makynge," writes "Wryting." It is noteworthy that the fee paid in almost every case is the same. It is evident, then, that to Edmund Wright and to the people who paid him, these two words, when used in relation to these accounts, were synonymous: they were used year after year interchangeably to express exactly the same task, in every instance to describe the same piece of work until 1589, after which the word used is always "entringe."

From the first year of Elizabeth's reign the word "makynge" is used fifteen times and "writynge" nineteen times. Twice

occurs "makynge and writynge," and once "makynge or writynge." Then from 1589 onward the word used is "entrynge," but there is no variation in the fee.

I also looked through the accounts of the churchwardens of Kilmington, a small parish in East Devon, and noted the following. Under 1556-7, "Payd to John Rogge for makynge of the bocke of Accounts, viijd." The next year the entry is, "Payd for Wrytten of our accompts," but the sum paid is torn away. Next year it says, "Payd for makynge of oure accounts iiijd," and the following year also, but in 1562 the item is "payd to John Rugg for caryeng of tymber & wrytting of our accompts viijd." In 1563 it is "payd to John Rugg for wrytting of our accompts viijd." "Wrytting" the accounts occurs once more, but afterwards there is no mention of the accounts, so doubtless somebody was doing them without payment. The only trace of them is, "Itm for inke & paper to keep theire accompt, id," in 1599.

RECKONING WITH COUNTERS

Halliwell-Phillipps knew that both John Taylor and John Shakespeare had made the Chamberlains' Accounts, but as "nearly all tradesmen reckoned with counters," he considered that they could make the accounts, even though they could not write their own names. It is therefore important to know exactly what counters could and could not be made to do.

In J. E. Thorold-Rogers' *History of Agriculture and Prices* there is a short paragraph with several examples illustrating that mode of reckoning.¹ Also a description of the system² is to be found in Vol. VII of the Pipe Roll Society's publications. Professor Thorold-Rogers says that though arabic numerals were known in the thirteenth century, the use of Roman numerals in reckoning money values and in casting accounts prevailed till midway in the reign of Elizabeth. "To assist in this clumsy process counters were purchased. In 1418 a dozen cost 3d; in 1419 2d!"³

The Professor gives several examples of reckoning with

¹ Vol. iv, p. 597.

² *Hist. Agriculture and Prices*, p. 597.

³ By Hubert Hall, p. viii.

counters taken from the cellarer's account of Sion Abbey in the 21st and 22nd of *Henry VIII*. "It will be seen," he says, "that they reckoned in hundreds, scores, and units; by pounds shillings and pence"¹ (see Fig. 54).

There is also a very long and detailed account of the process in the introduction to the *Dialogus de Scaccario*, edited by Arthur Hughes, C. G. Crump and C. Johnson. And in the *Antiquities and Curiosities of the Exchequer*, by Hubert Hall, F.S.A., is an interesting treatise of the manner in which in the early Middle Ages the officials of the Exchequer reckoned with counters, either on the morrow of Easter or on that of the Feast of St. Michael. He says if one could have peered into the great chamber where the barons sat, a score or so of grave and reverend officials, for the most part ecclesiastics, would have been visible seated on low benches, round a table covered with dark cloth curiously patterned.² This was the famous Exchequer-table, which has given its name both to the apartment and to the revenue, much as the decorated ceiling of another chamber is supposed to have suggested the name for a later tribunal—the Star Chamber. The table was ten feet long by five in width, bordered by a ledge four inches high and covered with dark russet cloth, divided into squares by intersecting lines, forming columns and spaces of account, within each of which a sum deposited had a certain numerical value according to its position towards the left hand of the reckoner, the column furthest to the right being for pence, the next for shillings, the next pounds and the remaining spaces scores, hundreds, and thousands of pounds respectively.

The above is a much shortened abstract of Mr. Hall's description, which is followed by a long account of the tallies and the manner of cutting them and of what was written upon them.³

¹ *Hist. Agriculture and Prices*, pp. 597 and 598.

² In *Wardrobe Acts. of King Edward IV*, p. 170, is Rich. Sheldon and John Colesh, auditors of th' Exchequier . . . cloth for their liveries, "and betwix them a yerde and iij quarters grene clothe for half a counting clothe."

³ Counters used at the Exchequer, see pp. 118, 124, 126, 221. Hubert Hall, F.S.A., *Antiquities and Curiosities of the Exchequer*.

RECORD'S "GROUND OF ARTS"

All these four descriptions of reckoning with counters are modern, but a book which was printed in the time of Henry VIII is a work written when counters were constantly being used and which explains at length the ordinary sort of arithmetic, and also "accomptyng by counters." It is a small black-letter book first issued in 1540, "made by M. Robert Records Doctor of Physike," and generally known as Record's *Ground of Artes*.

On folio 86 there is a dialogue between "Mayster and Scholar," and the first begins: "Now that you have learned the common kyndes of Arithmetike with the penne, you shall see the same arte in counters: whiche feate doeth not onely serve for theym that can not write and reade, but also for them that can do bothe, but have not at some tymes their penne or tables ready with them."

This first paragraph might be understood as meaning that counters would serve to enable "them that cannot write or read" not only to reckon but also to *make* accounts such as the Chamberlains made at Stratford, and it seems very probable that Halliwell-Phillipps had seen it, and had taken it in that sense.

But in continuing to study Dr. Record's book it becomes obvious that the author takes for granted that anyone who puts down the examples that he gives is able to use a pen, and of course his book was not addressed to people who could not read. It is also clear that counters, without pen and ink, were quite incapable of recording anything. There is no evidence whatever that the Stratford Chamberlains used counters, though in many old Account Rolls, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is possible to say that counters had been used, and this can be said of some of the Birthplace documents, because the operator while counting with them had put down on parchment or paper in a series of minute dots the sum as expressed on the counter board. Take, for example, the Cellarer's Account of Sion Abbey¹ in the 21st and 22nd years of Henry VIII, which is in the Public Record Office.

¹ On the Thames in Surrey.

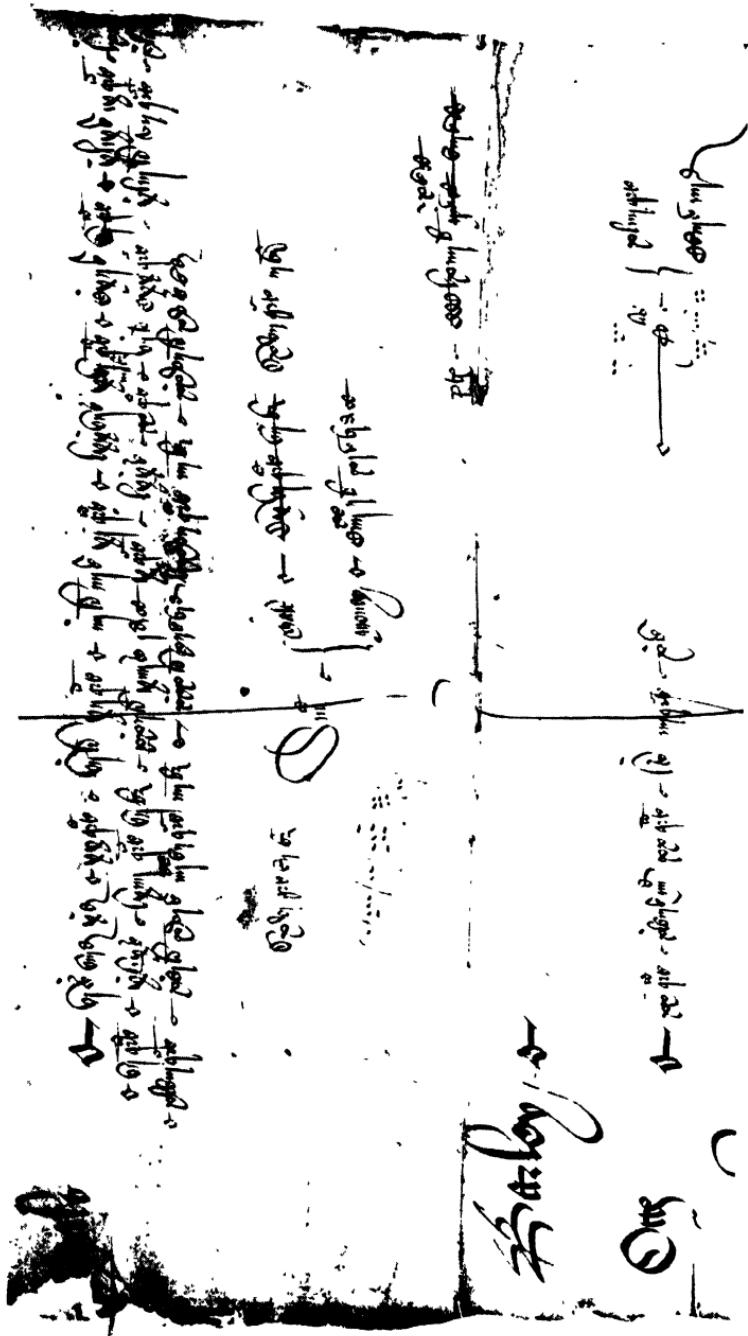


FIG. 54.—Cellarer's account, Sion Abbey, showing the manner of counting with counters

The malt consumed for brewing in the monastery was 617 quarters 3 bushels, and cost £182 11s. 6½d. Forty-four quarters of oats cost £5 8s. 4d. It will be seen by the photograph at Fig. 54 that the cost of the malt is indicated by a group of dots which stand for the counters which the Cellarer had arranged on the counter board. These were intended as temporary memoranda for the operator's own use, and are so diminutive as to require looking for. More to the right, the same sum is shown much more carefully written, in Roman numerals. It can also be seen that the dot in the column on the extreme left represents one hundred, the next four scores, two dots in the next column £2 sterling: in the next a dot above the line on the right of the column represents five, and with six dots below, five plus six equal eleven shillings, six dots in the next column are the pence, and two dots below the line stand for two farthings. Total, £182 11s. 6½d. The account for oats (spelt "Otts") is more simple and is to be seen lower down on the same roll. There are in the *amount* only two spaces. In the one to the left are two dots representing two scores, and on the right four units, the two groups making 44 quarters. The *cost* of the oats is expressed by five dots in the column to the left representing five scores, i.e. £5; in the next column three dots in a row with one dot above the line in the right-hand corner, that is, three plus five, stands for the eight shillings and in the extreme right four dots indicate four pence, total, £5 8s. 4d.

Dr. Record says of his "Grounds of Artes, Teachyng the works and practice of Arithmetic after a more easier and exacter sorte, than any lyke hath hytherto been sette forth." But after studying these preceding five authorities who have undertaken to elucidate the problem of reckoning with counters, I must confess that I should have found it much easier to learn to write.

A paper book at the Birthplace is a Rental of the lands and tenements of the Trinity Guild of Coventry made to Master Roger Wales, Master of the said Guild on the feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Henry VII (see Fig. 55). At the bottom left-hand corner somebody who has been reckoning up the items of payment

by means of counters has made a rapid note of the totals at the bottom of each page, by means of a series of dots, so that the counters could be used for another calculation or stowed away. The rents were collected quarterly and vertical strokes on a horizontal line indicate the quarterly payments. The one at the top had only made two payments, and the next only three, as the first has only two strokes, and the second three. In Record's book he continues the Mayster's speech, which I have partly quoted, thus:

"This sort is in two fourmes commenly. The one by lynes, and the other without lines: in that that hath lines, the lines do stand, for the order of places: and in that that hath no lynes, there muste be sette in their stede so many counters as shall nede, for eche lyne one, and they shall supply the stede of the lynes. S.¹ By examples I should better perceive your meaning. M.² For example of the lynes so here you see vi. lynes, which stand for syxe places so that the nethermost standeth for the first place, and the next above it, for the seconde: and so upward tyl you come to the highest, whiche is the syxte lyne, and standeth for the syxte place. Nowe what is the valewe of every place or lyne, you may perceive by the figures whyche I have sct on them, which is according as you learned before in the Numeration of figures by the penne: for the fyrst place is the place of unitees or ones, and every counter set in that line, betokeneth but one: and the second lyne in the place of 10, for every counter there standeth for 10. The thyrd lyne, the place of hundredes, the fourth of thousandes: and so foorth." At King's Norton, an ancient Worcestershire village which is now a part of Birmingham, the old Grammar School in the churchyard was till recent times a venerable and most picturesque structure (Fig. 56), and in the upper storey contained "a study of books" given by the Reverend Thomas Hall, who was a Master of Warwick Grammar School about 1620 and after-

¹ In the examples he gives the lines are horizontal, but the lines most in use were vertical, dividing the problem into spaces like those in the Cellarer's Account from Sion Abbey.

² M. stands for Mayster, and S. for Scholar.

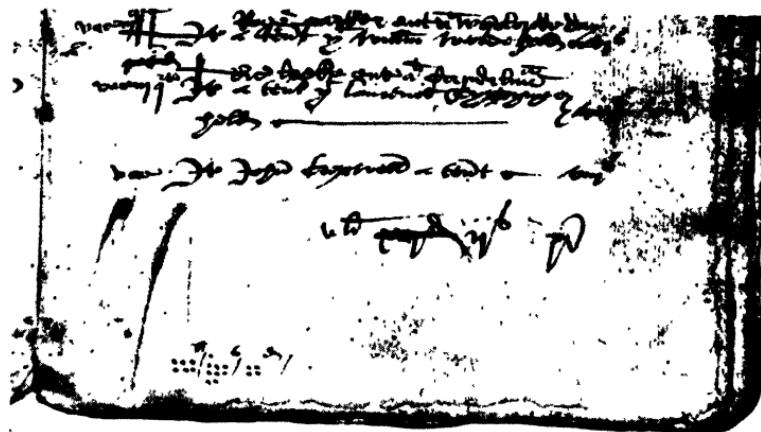


FIG. 55.—Coventry rent roll, showing reckoning by counters



FIG. 59.—Kinwarton pigeon-house

[To face page 208]

wards Curate of King's Norton, and Master of the Grammar School there for many years. About the year 1887 Mr. W.

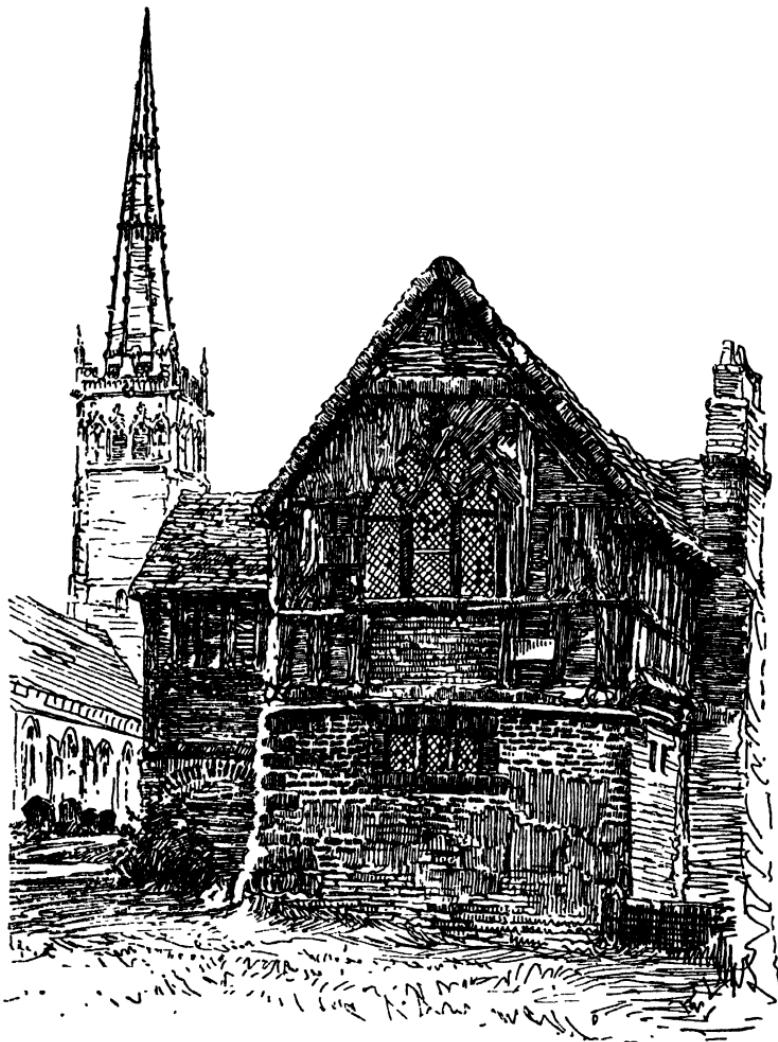


FIG. 56.—The Grammar School at King's Norton

Salt Brassington became interested in the career of Thomas Hall, and thus describes the school and books in a paper read before the Birmingham Archaeological Society, "Heavy oaken

beams arch overhead; the walls are lined with panelling and high book-presses of dark oak; the latter contain some eight hundred volumes of leather and vellum-bound books—upon the higher shelves duodecimos and the like, upon the lower shelves quartos and ponderous folios."

Among the books, which were on these shelves for centuries but are now in the Birmingham Reference Library, is a volume printed at Friburg in 1503 and called *Margarita Philosophica*. A wood-engraving has a central figure of a lady in a long gown with puffed and slashed sleeves which has some of the new arabic numerals dotted upon it. Behind her head and shoulders a curly label has the legend *TYPVS ARITHMETICAE*. In each hand she holds out an open book, and in front of her are two tables supported on late Gothic trestles. The one to the right of the spectator is evidently a counter-table and is marked with lines which would enable the old man who is seated at it to count up to one thousand. He seems to be adding two sums together and has got very worried about it. On the left is another table on which are a number of arabic numerals. The young man who is seated at it has a very complacent expression, as he glances across at the old-fashioned arrangements of the elder man. Near his right hand are objects, apparently money bags, and at the end of the table a pewter ink-stand, of the kind which is a long box with a small ink-well at one end and at the other a small dusting-box. In the Middle Ages it was usual to dry writing with either fine sand or brass dust. Professor Thorold-Rogers says that these substances are still to be found in the ink of old manuscripts. But he also found fourteenth-century instances of the purchase of blotting paper.¹

THE SCORE AND THE TALLY

Shakespeare, having allowed Jack Cade to say, "Whereas, before, our fore-fathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used,"² some biographers vaguely refer to them as though such aids to memory

¹ *History of Agriculture and Prices*, vol. iv.

² *Second Henry VI*, Act IV, Sc. 7.

were adequate substitutes for writing, and as though the Chamberlain's accounts could be made by means of them.

No doubt "Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot," could have kept a score at the back of her tavern door, with a piece of chalk or a burnt stick, so long as she could remember what the marks meant and that Christopher Sly owed for "sheer ale" and not for "small beer."

Accounts as crude and simple as these could be kept by people who were illiterate, but tallies in the days of John Shakespeare were often quite large and were covered with writing and figures, as well as notches, by people who were expert with pen and ink. Tallies were often known as tally-stocks in early times. A very simple kind is still used to keep count of the work done by hop-pickers in Worcestershire and Herefordshire "hop-yards," and Kentish "hop-gardens."

A short and authentic definition of a tally is given in the *New English Dictionary*. "A stick or rod of wood usually squared, marked on one side by transverse notches representing the amount of a debt or payment. The rod being cleft lengthwise across the notches, the debtor and creditor each retained one of the halves, the agreement or tallying of which constituted legal proof of the debt."

Tallies were much used in Shakespeare's time, and they continued in the King's Exchequer until the beginning of the last century. When out of date many of them were used as firewood in Government offices. In 1826, when the ancient Court of Exchequer was abolished, the old Tally Room was ordered to be cleared out, and as the wooden tallies had been long in store they were very dry and inflammable. It was in an evil hour decided to burn them in the furnace under the Peers' Chamber, with the result that the Houses of Parliament, and nearly the whole Palace of Westminster were burned down, and the Painted Chamber with many ancient tapestries and other priceless antiquities also destroyed.

There are at the Public Record Office several hundreds of tallies, which were found in 1910 when the Chapel of the Pyx was repaired. Some of them are of thirteenth-century date and these, like all old tallies, are covered with writing, and were used by people who could read and write.

Chapter IX

Mary Arden's Ancestry

WRITING of Robert Arden of Wilmcote, Halliwell-Phillipps says: "He was most likely the grandson of a Robert Arden who was the bailiff of Snitterfield about the middle of the fifteenth century and who is also mentioned in a record of 1461 as *nuper firmarius terre dominice ibidem*, but there is nothing in the evidences yet discovered to authorize a further conjecture respecting the primitive descent; and it should be borne in mind that the surname is one that belonged, at these early periods, to numerous families in the Midland counties."¹

But no matter how many of these families existed, it proves nothing to the purpose; they were in all reasonable probability offshoots of the great Arden family. As they had been in Warwickshire for centuries, naturally there would be a number of people of that name, and Halliwell-Phillipps' wild guess that Robert Arden was the grandson of a Robert Arden who was described as *firmarius* in 1461, is obviously no more than a guess. The word *firmarius* does not indicate a tiller of the soil such as he was searching for. If the Robert Arden of 1461 has been an ordinary farmer he would have been described as *agricola*, not as *firmarius*, which meant that that Arden was the receiver of the revenues for the owners of the land, paying a fixed sum for the proceeds. There are many instances of important people being recorded as "farmers" in that sense of the word, nor does the fact that this Robert Arden was the bailiff of Snitterfield indicate that he lived there and was not an Arden of Park Hall. In the "Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York, at Greenwich in 1503, is "Of Sr Richard

¹ *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 366.

Nanfan fermour of the lordship of Odiham by thandes of Robert Wakefield bailiff there xj li, ijs, viijd." and "Of S^t John Frye preest fermour of Worthy Mortymer viij li. xijs. iiijd."¹ Neither of these "farmers" was a member of the farming class. The home of the Nanfans was at Birts Morton, a fine old moated house near Grcat Malvern.

THE ANCESTORS OF ROBERT ARDEN

Neither Halliwell-Phillipps nor even Sir Sidney Lee was willing to admit that Shakespeare's grandfather, Robert Arden, was descended from the Arden's of Park Hall, but preferred to assume that he was an ordinary farmer who was descended from some humbler branch of the Arden family, the existence of which branch nobody has been able to discover. But Shakespeare's maternal ancestors, his grandfather and great-grandfather, do not appear upon the scene as unrecognized and obscure tillers of the soil. They are accompanied by some of the most distinguished, wealthy, and important people in that part of England. There have been many theories and conjectures concerning the ancestry of Shakespeare's mother, but the labours of Mr. George Russell French and Mrs. C. C. Stopes have during the last half of the nineteenth century greatly cleared away the fog that surrounded it. A document dated 1501 in the Birthplace shows that Mary Arden's father was the son of Thomas Arden of Wilmcote, and this document (which has been quoted in Chapter II) gives the names of certain trustees to whom John Mayowe transferred a mes-suage and one hundred acres of land at Snitterfield.² They were Robert Throckmorton, Esquire, shortly afterwards knighted, Thomas Trussell of Billesley, Roger Reynolds of Henley in Arden, William Wood of Woodhouse, Thomas Arden of Wilmcote, and Robert Arden the son of Thomas Arden.³

That the two first were important personages cannot be

¹ *Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York*, p. 107.

² This evidently was a purchase by Thomas Arden for his son Robert, who was probably not then of full age, and hence the trustees.

³ The Latin document is printed in Mrs. Stopes's *Shakespeare's Family*, pp. 29 and 30. Transcribed from *Misc. Doc.*, vol. ii, No. 83.

questioned. They were both great landowners and well known throughout the kingdom.¹

SIR ROBERT THROCKMORTON

Sir Robert Throckmorton, whose chief seat was at Coughton Court, a grand old mansion still in the same family and only a few miles from Wilmcote, was a man of great influence and importance. Dugdale gives a very long and interesting account of his career,² in which he states, "That he was a man of singular Piety, the sundry Bequests contained in his Testament do sufficiently manifest; and of no lesse Devotion, as may seem by his Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which in 10 H. 8, (having settled his Estate) he undertook, but dyed beyond Sea in that Journey." Moreover, he was a trusted friend of the Ardens of Park Hall. Mrs. Stopes has shown that this Sir Robert Throckmorton and two other knights with John Kingsmel, Serjeant-at-Law, were appointed by Sir John Arden of Park Hall to be trustees for his children. It has also been pointed out by the late Dr. J. S. Smart that when Sir Walter Arden made a settlement on his wife, he formed a body of trustees to whom certain property was conveyed by a legal instrument for the purpose and Sir Robert Throckmorton was one of them. This is precisely what Thomas Arden of Wilmcote did in purchasing the Snitterfield land for his son Robert. Does it not seem a very illuminating fact that such a wealthy and distinguishing neighbour of his should have acted for him in the same capacity as that in which he, Sir Robert, had been acting for Sir Walter Arden of Park Hall? If Walter Arden was Thomas Arden's father it would appear to be a quite natural arrangement.

¹ Finding that there are serious errors in the extract from Sir Walter Arden's will, which Mrs. Stopes printed in *Shakespeare's Environment*, and also in the certified copy which G. Russell-French had from Doctors' Commons, I obtained a copy from Somerset House, and found that Mrs. Stopes had been misled. The manor left to Martin Arden, he did recover. It was Nafford, a place on the Avon below Pershore.

² *History of Warwickshire*, p. 526.

THOMAS TRUSSELL

The second name on the list of feoffees is that of Thomas Trussell of Billesley. Dugdale's account of the Throckmortons and their ancestors is a very long one, but that of the Trussells of Billesley is longer still, occupying five pages of his huge folio volume, and showing their pedigree back to Osbert Trussell of the reign of Henry II in 1155. Of the Thomas who was one of Robert Arden's trustees for the Snitterfield estate, he says that he "bore the Office of Shiriffe for this County & Leicestershire in 23 H. 7. and bequeathing his body to be buried in the Church here at Billesley, departed this life in the 7 Henry 8."¹

Alured Trussell, born in 1533, married Margaret, daughter of Robert Fulwood, and their daughter Dorothy married Adam Palmer, Robert Arden's friend.² Also John Fulwood of Little Alnc married Robert Arden's stepdaughter.

WILLIAM WOOD AND ROGER REYNOLDS

We have seen that Thomas Trussell was also an important figure in the county, and his manorial hall at Billesley was barely a mile and a half from Wilmcote; but it occurred to me that it would be interesting if we could find out what sort of persons were the other two feoffees.

William Wood of Woodhouse I have not been able to trace, but there are several members of a Wood family in the great Register of the Knowle Guild, who may have been his ancestors. Woodhouse was probably the name of his dwelling.

I found, however, that Roger Reynolds of Henley in Arden was the son of a William Reynolds of the same place, whose will was recently discovered by Mr. William Cooper, F.S.A., at Somerset House. Roger must have died a few years after he was named as one of the trustees of Robert Arden for the transfer of the land at Snitterfield, in 1501, because the date of his father's will is 1507 and in it he is only mentioned once and in these words, "To the Gild of Henley a portuose³ to the

¹ Shakespeare—*Truth and Tradition*, p. 64.

² *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 28.

³ A breviary.

intent that I & Roger my son be prayed for amongst all Christian souls perpetually in the common bedrowle."

WILLIAM REYNOLDS' WILL

William Reynolds' body was to be buried in the chapel of Henley "before the image of Our Lady in our Lady Chapel there." He left £10, an unusually large sum, to wage a priest

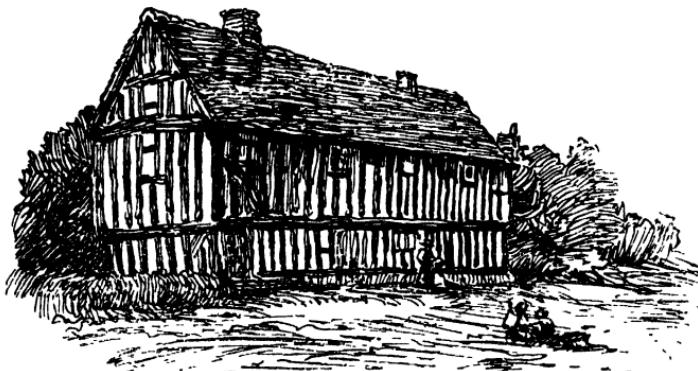


FIG. 57.—Guild Hall, Aston Cantlow

to celebrate two years next after his decease, in the said chapel, also one hundred shillings to wage a priest to celebrate in the chapel of St. Kateryne within the fine cruciform church of Solihull. "To my mother church of Worcester 2d." To the chapel of Moysley (Moseley, now part of Birmingham) 6s. 8d. and his second best piece of silver. To the Guild of Aston for masses for his soul "10£ to be levied out of my land there called Pathlowe." This Guild, therefore, was the Guild of Aston Cantlow, in which parish Thomas Arden dwelt and of which Pathlow is a hamlet. The home of the Guild priests, a fine old fourteenth-century house of oak beams, is still in good condition, on the village green (Fig. 57).

Mr. George Russell French found among the Feet of Fines for Aston Cantlow, William Reynolds and Richard Boteler,¹ in the sixth year of Henry VII.

William Reynolds also left "To the four orders of Friars

¹ *Shakespeareana Genealogica*, p. 494.

for four trentals¹ of them to be said 40s. To Alis Reynolds, daughter to my eldest son John 20s., 6 silver spoons & two kine. To the children of John Smyth & Johane my daughter 40s. To the said Johane my best mazer, my best coffer, my second best basin & laver, my best silver girdle, & 12 silver spoons. To the children begotten between the said John Smyth & my daughter Joane, six silver spoons. To Johane Smyth the daughter of the said John Smyth & Johane my daughter my worst piece of silver. To said John Smyth my son-in-law my team of oxen, with yokes, bows, plow & wain. To the children of the said John & Johane Smith all my sheep. To the said Johane my daughter the kine belonging to my dery except the two that I have given to Alice Reynolds. To my daughter Johan & her children all my houschold goods not otherwise bequeathed. To William son of John Reynolds, the second best coffer or chest, six of the best pewter dishes, 4 silver spoons, my second best mazer, my best laver & basin & a brass mortar. To Robert Brereton a mazer & 13s. 4d. £20 to be spent at my burial or terying. To every servant 6s. 8d. To Agnes Gyner my servant 2 oxen which are in her father in law's keeping. To Sir Thomas Bownall my third best mazer. My best silver piece & my salt of silver to the Guild of Henley, to buy a pair of vestments to be occupied at our Lady Altar there. To Sir Philip Etyington a mazer. Half the wood in my yard to be given to the poor after my decease and John Smyth to have the other half. 8 marks a year to my wife. To Sir Robert Throkemorton & other of my feoffees of a house in Henley in Arden wherein Robert Whelwright dwelleth under a state to other feoffees to the use of the Gild of the Holy Trinity of Henley in Arden to the intent that I may be prayed for in the bedroll as a founder. If they can make it sure. If not it to be sold by the feoffees for the benefit of the said Guild. To my feoffees a parcel of land & meadow lying beside Blithbrigge to the use of the church of Solihull, if they can make it sure, to the intent that I may be prayed for. If not it is to be sold for the benefit of the said church. To my feoffees a mese place with a garden lying in Beaudesert next to the church whereof I have under a state to Edward Brereton & his heirs

¹ A trental was 30 masses.

on condition that they give to the parson there or to the priest serving him 4d a year to pray for me yearly in the bederoll & id to say a mass for me & id to the clerk of the church to ring my knyll. Feoffees to have charge of all my other property in Warwickshire & Worcestershire not yet mentioned to the use of William Reynolds son of John Reynolds, late my eldest son until he come to the age of 24.

"For lack of issue the remainder of all my lands & tenements in Solihull & (King's) Norton¹ are to go to Alice sister of said William Reynolds. The remainder of all my lands by me purchased to Jasper, son of John Smyth & Johane his wife my daughter, & his heirs & for lack of their issue, remainder to John brother of said Jasper, & so to John Boteler of Solihull etc.

"My feoffees of my house in Henley in Arden wherein Richard Barret dwelleth are to make a state of it to William Porrey, with remainder to William Reynolds, son of John Reynolds. Sir Robert Throckmorton to have the rule of the aforesaid William Reynolds, son of John R^s. & his land until he is 24.

"To John Boteler, Solihull, 40s. To Edmond Brereton, gent., 40. To Sir Thomas Bownell, 40s. To Philip Etynton priest, 40s. & they four are appointed executors.

"Sir Robert Throckmorton to be my overseer & to have 40s. for his pains. To John Smyth, 20s. to oversee under Master Throckmorton.

"Witnesses, John Prat, William Whateley, William Grete-wiche of Henley, & Thomas Barret of Owlebarowe.

"Probate 6 May 1507."²

It is clear, therefore, that Roger Reynolds, as well as the other two feoffees of Thomas Arden & his son, was a man of good family. His father, as shown by his will, was a friend of Sir Robert Throckmorton and not the kind of person that the swinish and squalid Ardens which Halliwell-Phillipps depicted would be at all likely to be friendly with. By the amount of real estate that he disposed of, by the valuable and interesting possessions that he left (mazers were always valuable and one was sold recently for £10,000, in spite of the bad times) and

¹ Both now a part of Birmingham.

² Somerset House, P.C.C.23. Adeane.

by the money and goods that he bequeathed to his kindred and to the Church, William Reynolds must have been a man of refinement and wealth. Moreover, the friends mentioned in the will were friends of the Ardens of Park Hall.

YOUNGER SONS

Another fact bearing on the question of the ancestry of Shakespeare's mother is that Thomas Arden, Robert's father, was a younger son, and that a younger son, unless his parents could buy an heiress for him, had in those days to take a very "back seat" in the family arrangements. The system that had kept up Sir Walter's position and saved his estates from being divided among his ancestor's children was the same primogeniture system which had made his younger son Thomas comparatively obscure and much less wealthy. In fact, when judged by the standard of importance that younger sons were generally given in the sixteenth century, the Ardens of Wilmcote may well have thought themselves exceptionally fortunate.

Consider, for instance, the will of Anne Neville in 1597-8, printed by the Surtees Society. The editor, Canon Greenwell, says, "she was the widow of Arthur Neville who came of a branch of the noble & illustrious house of Raby. The will & inventory are interesting as shewing to what a low estate a relation of the proud and wealthy Earls of Westmoreland had fallen; and that too, before the attainer of the last Earl, for Arthur Neville could only be ranked among the yeomen, in spite of gentle blood & an historic name."

Again, the celebrated antiquary, Canon James Raine, in commenting on the will of John Francke, gentleman, of Myddelton Tyas in Yorkshire, says: "The testator, in all probability, was a younger son of the family of Franke of Kneton. Like many other younger children he seems to have been left almost portionless, and though he still retained the name of gentleman, his inventory proves him to have been in the lowest rank of life." The editor does not, however, print the inventory.¹

Then concerning the will of James Layburne of Bradley-

¹ Surtees Society, *Wills and Inv.*, Richmond, vol. 26, p. 170.

fylde, Canon Raine says: "A younger son of the great family of Laborne, who had become a farmer under the head of his house."¹ Numerous other instances could readily be given of younger sons and their descendants in positions of strong contrast to that of the eldest son.

Then there is Falstaff's scathing description of his followers, "such as, indeed, were never soldiers, but discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, & ostlers trade-fallen."²

Shakespeare himself has some very pungent passages relating to the status of younger sons, the treatment of Orlando in the household of his elder brother Oliver, for instance, and his bitter protest against it: "I know you are my eldest brother: and in the gentle condition of blood you should so know me. The courtesy of nations allows you my better in that you are the first born; but the same tradition takes not away my blood were there twenty brothers betwixt us: I have as much of my father in me as you; albeit I confess your coming before me is nearer to his reverence."³ It is, indeed, possible enough that the poet may have had in mind his own descent and the effect which this custom of primogeniture may have had upon his own position in life.

An Italian gentleman, writing about the year 1500 of the monasteries of England, said: "I, for my part, believe that the English priests would desire nothing better than what they have got, were it not that they are obliged to assist the Crown in time of war, and also to keep many poor gentlemen, who are left beggars in consequence of the inheritance devolving to the eldest son."⁴ Almost any number of instances could be given; one from Norfolk tells the same story. In the Household Accounts of the Lestranges of Hunstanton is this: "Itm pd to Richard le Straunge the xth daye of Octobre for his half yeres anuyte ended at Candelmas next, Ls." The Editor says: "Here is a younger son's annuity £5 a year at that time. A few entries lower, however, this fifty shillings is called his quarter's

¹ Surtees Society, *Wills and Inv.*, Richmond, vol. 26, p. 39.

² *King Henry IV*, Part I, Act IV, Sc. 2.

³ *As You Like It*, Act I, Sc. 1.

⁴ Camden Society, *An Italian Relation of England*, 1847, p. 41.

anity; so we may hope he had £10 a year. He was afterwards "Customer of Lynn."¹

Nothing seems to be discoverable as to who was the first wife of Robert Arden and the mother of his seven daughters, but of the second wife various facts can be stated. She was the sister of Alexander Webbe of Bearley, was married to John Hill of the same parish, and had by him a son John, and a daughter Mary. In 1546, as a widow, she was assessed on £7.² Mrs. Stopes found in the Court Roll of Katherine the Queen, at Temple Balsall in a View of Frank pledge (1548): "To this court came Agnes Hill, widow and prayed license to marry one Robert Ardern, which was granted in the name of the Lady the Queen, by her seneschal."³ Her husband, John Hill, had died in 1545.

In 1550 Robert Arden made two settlements of his Snitterfield property, apparently in anticipation of his second marriage. That it was about that date when he married again is suggested by the wording of the lease of a farm at Snitterfield which Agnes granted to her brother May 21, 1560: "of which . . . estate was made to me the sayd Agnes . . . by Robert Arden my late husband in the fourth year of the raigne of the late King Edward Six, 1550."⁴

ROBERT ARDEN'S RELIGION

Sir Sidney Lee says, "The exordium of his will which was drawn up on November 24, 1556, and proved on December 16 following, indicates that he was an observant Catholic."⁵ But the will itself shows that that is very improbable. It begins with the usual formula, almost invariable before the Reformation. "First I bequeathe my soul to Almighty God & our blessed Lady Saint Mary and to all the holy company of heaven, and my body to be buried in the churchyard of Saint John the Baptist in Aston aforesaid," which indicates that the will was made in the reign of a Catholic monarch, but the document itself shows no sign that the testator was an observant

¹ *Archaeologia*, vol. xxv, p. 509.

² *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 247.

³ P.R.O., Portfolio 207(9).

⁴ *Shakespeareana Genealogica*, p. 469. ⁵ *Life of William Shakespeare*, 1915, p. 7.

Roman Catholic. If he had been, he would certainly have wished for the prayers of his friends and neighbours: he would have left money at least to his Vicar and to his parish church, and probably to the Mother Church at Worcester. Also to the neighbouring clergy with the request that his soul should be prayed for, but his will does not even ask for the prayers of the villagers to whom he did leave money. There was at that time nothing to prevent Robert making any of these requests in his will. One may compare it with the will of a neighbour of the Ardens, that of John Little of Wroxall, which though written *in the third year of Queen Elizabeth, 1561*, has a much more Catholic tendency. He leaves his body to be buried *in* the church of Wroxall "and the day of my burial to have the communion and those that come to the churche to pray for my sole to have halfe peny bred and for my neighbors to haue a honeste Drynckinge at home both rost and soddin meate. Item I give & bequeethe to the churche of Wroxall iijs. iiijd. I bequeethe to s'John Browne curcat of Wraxall to prey for my soull iijs. iiijd." He leaves money to the repair of the highways in Wroxall and Haseley, and the residue to his family.¹

Also the will of Richard Saunders of Wroxall, made September 1, 1551, has the following passages: "I, R^d. Saunders of Wraxall C^o. Warr. Sycke in body etc. to be buried in the church yard of Wraxall & to have deryge & the communyon in church at buriall, neighbours & thouse that come breyde & ale."

¹ *Wroxall Records* (No. 82, Worc.).

Chapter X

Robert Arden and Wilmcote

TO-DAY if we essay to follow Robert Arden's probable route from the farm which he owned at Snitterfield, to his home at Wilmcote, the most direct way is still a narrow and leafy lane which plunges very soon into dense oak woods which are now of only moderate growth. It descends more or less steeply for nearly two miles, and the woods only cease at a small tavern called "The Dun Cow," the sign of which is a belated reminiscence of the great Guy of Warwick's ancient prowess.

The inn stands upon the main road—now much widened and as smooth as "tarmac" can make it—which goes from Stratford to Birmingham, and all wheeled traffic has to follow it for a hundred yards, before turning down Feather-bed Lane to Wilmcote village. But Robert Arden would follow the lane that is now only a field-path, straight down the sloping ground towards the village which is hidden in one of the many folds of the ground in the uneven plain below. The country is open but not so open as when he saw it. The rich turf of these fenced-in fields, and even the neglected surface of a wild and thorny common that stretches from Pathlow down to the railway, are heaved into wave on wave of regular undulations, the lands, rigs or selions, left by centuries of ploughing, and still eloquent of the old days when there was much more corn on these uplands and fewer thorns, briars, and blackberry bushes. Therefore Robert Arden would pass through many acres of plough-land, undivided except by the grassy balks, but this landscape is in Arden, and we can take for granted a certain amount of woodiness here and there,

though the way would not be through these leafy lanes and under the over-arching elm branches that now carry such masses of dark foliage. The regularity of the turf-y billows, even where long protracted neglect has encouraged rough scrub, coarse, rank herbage, and clumps of thorns to run riot, shows that the land was "champion" in the past. As Malvolio says when he reads Maria's letter, "Daylight and champion discovers not more: this is open."¹

As he rode from Snitterfield to Wilmcote, Robert Arden would see the broad outlines of the landscape, very much as we see it now; but as he left the woods, and looked across the open champaign-country below, many features in detail would be very different. To-day the brilliant green of the meadows is broken by serried ranks of elms, irregular blots of dense thicket, and divided by innumerable hedgerows—"hardly hedge-rows, little lines of sportive wood run wild." In the time of Robert Arden, the fields that were "several"—that is, enclosed as separate plots, and fenced round—would be few and found only as he approached the village itself. There was a proportion of grazing-ground, but the greater part of it would be grazed in common by the cattle and horses of the community, and tended by the herdman.

WILMCOTE VILLAGE—THE VILLAGE TO-DAY

Though it was known as Much or Great Wilmcote in ancient times, it is still a small place, a hamlet in the parish of Aston Cantlow. It is not probable that Robert Arden, as he reached his homestead, would see many of the buildings which are visible to-day. The small church and the adjacent school and vicarage are wholly modern, though built of the local grey stone. There is a very new railway station, a half-derelict canal, and some remains of the lime works which used to convert the local stone into cement. There are some picturesque cottages, and several farmsteads which are for the most part ancient: but there is little that one can absolutely claim for the latter part of the fifteenth century or the earlier half of the sixteenth, the period in which the Ardens are

¹ *Twelfth Night*, Act II, Sc. 5.

known to have lived here, except the very fine old house which has been popularly known for many years as "Mary Arden's Cottage," an absurd name for what was not a cottage but a small manor-house. That it was a house of some importance is made clear by its size and the fine timbers that have been used in its construction, and also by the fact of its possessing a large stone pigeon-house.

ROBERT ARDEN'S HOUSE

Robert Arden's house is not difficult to depict, as there are two inventories in existence which mention the rooms; there



FIG. 58.—Arden house at Wilmcote

was a hall, chambers, and a kitchen. In such a house there was no room over the hall which was open to the roof-timbers and had no chimney, but only a central hearth for the fire, with either a louvre over it or a window in the gable through which the smoke would escape.

In 1929, when the Trustees bought the house and asked my advice as to repairs it was completely covered with plaster, but obviously of ancient timber construction. An old drawing at the Birthplace which professed to represent the house before the plaster had hidden the timbers was so interesting that it seemed too good to be true, but when the tenant's furniture was gone, and Mr. F. C. Wellstood and I had made some

experimental explorations, the building proved to be a Gothic house, built of oak beams in the early close-timbering manner only nine inches apart, with, at the end of an open hall, a more ornate addition, exactly as the old drawing had shown it. Within, it had been converted into two storeys by putting in a floor supported on unusually massive beams. It is probable that this had been done in the reign of Elizabeth, as it was about that time that the chimney with a flue in the wall superseded the louvre in the roof.

Robert Arden's will appears to suggest that the copyhold farm where his wife was living or was to live was in a different part of the manor to the freehold estate which he left to his daughter Marye: "I give & bequeathe to my youngste dowghter Marye all my lande in Willmecote, cawlide Asbyes and the crop apone the grounde sowne and tyllide as hitt is and vj.li. xiijs. iiijd. of monye to be payde ere my goodes be devydide."

It also shows that he was occupying the Asbies' farm himself, as he left her the crop on the ground sown and tilled as it is, which, moreover, suggests that he or some of his family were living there. There were two houses there, because when the property was mortgaged in 1579 by John Shakespeare and his wife, two houses are mentioned with two gardens besides the land.¹

Halliwell-Phillipps showed by a document in Shakespeare's Birthplace that the house which remains at Wilmcote belonged in the middle of the sixteenth century to the Fyndernes, who eventually sold it with other property to Adam Palmer and George Gibbes, who held it in common till 1571, when they divided it between them, and amongst the land assigned to Palmer was "one parcel of meadow and lees called the meadow-piece, adjoining to the close of John Shakespere's of the west side."² From this one would imagine that the Arden property

¹ "de duobus messuagiis, duobus gardinis quinquaginta acris terre, duabus acris prati, quatuor acris pasture et communia pasture pro omnimodis averisiis, cum pertinenciis, in Auston Cantlett." Note of a fine levied when the estate was mortgaged.—*Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 11.

² Ib., pp. 199, 200 and 201. I believe this house and land to have been the copyhold farm mentioned in Robert Arden's will. Of course, the freehold may have belonged to the Fyndernes at the same time.

called Asbyes was somewhere east of this spot and not far away. The exact position of the houses which belonged to Robert Arden has never been discovered, and Halliwell-Phillipps says, "All endeavours to ascertain the locality of the Meadow-Piece have hitherto failed." It is quite possible, however, that with the passage of time evidence will be found in some old Warwickshire manor-house, in the attics of some provincial lawyer, or in the Public Record Office which will for ever set this question at rest.

WILMCOTE PIGEON-HOUSE

An interesting feature of the Wilmcote farm is the ancient pigeon-house or dovecote. Shakespeare called them dove-houses. It has stone walls pierced with many nest-holes, which walls, as they are built only with local rubble, were, when bought by the Birthplace Trustees, bulging so much with age that it seemed dangerous to enter it. But Mr. William Weir,¹ who is accustomed to repairing ancient and neglected buildings, said that he had saved many church towers that were much worse, and now after his treatment it is quite strong and likely to last for centuries.

In England we doubtless owe the earliest dove-houses, which are round towers of stone, to the Normans, but such columbaria had been used in the days of Classic Rome, and it is possible that some of the more important villas built here during the Roman occupation may have possessed such buildings. Columella, Pliny, Varro and Aristotle all wrote about pigeons and columbaria. Varro says, "They should have a place to drink and bathe, for these birds are extremely cleanly. The pigeon-keeper should sweep them out every month."²

In Warwickshire these great edifices of solid masonry, with walls often three or more feet in thickness, are sometimes as old as the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Mr. Alfred Watkins, who wrote an exhaustive description of those of Herefordshire, examined some circular examples on the coast

¹ The well-known architect who repaired the house.

² *Marcus Terentius Varro on Agriculture*, Part III, vol. vii, pp. 5-8, edited by Professor H. B. Ash.

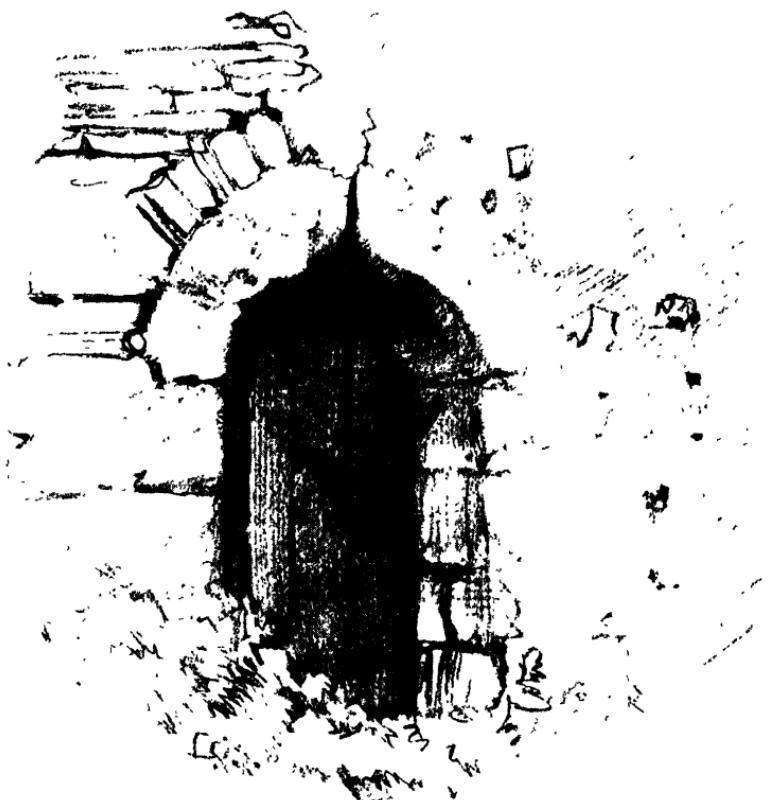
of Glamorgan, which he believed to be Norman in date. In a lecture delivered in 1890, he enumerated no less than thirty pigeon-houses which had been destroyed in that county in modern times. One of the most ancient that remains and in its architecture the most interesting, is at Garway in the valley of the Monnow, where there was a Preceptory of Knights Hospitallers. The Latin inscription cut on the tympanum over the doorway, to the effect that, "In the year 1320 Brother Richard built this Columbarium," shows that it was a portion of the Preceptory's domestic buildings.

In Worcestershire they were very plentiful fifty years ago, but in many places have been destroyed or allowed to decay. There are now ninety-three there. Mrs. Berkeley of Cotheridge Court wrote, at my suggestion, an account which has been printed in the Worcester Diocesan Archaeological Society's *Transactions* and which gives a most interesting description of practically all that now remain, with excellent photographic illustrations of seven examples.

I think that no systematic attempt has been made to record those which remain in Warwickshire, where they are only moderately numerous. The finest example in the county must certainly be the huge round one at Kinwarton three and a half miles from Wilmcote. It has never been scraped, so retains its ancient plaster. (Fig. 59.) This noble columbarium is seventy-five feet in circumference externally, and twenty-five in diameter. It is circular (that is, drum-shaped) and the walls are eighteen feet high to the wall-plate. The roof is conical and covered with tiles. At the apex is a late-looking louvre, and there are three dormers in the roof; but its finest feature is the fourteenth-century doorway, with its pointed ogee arch (Fig. 60), which indicates that the dove-cote was built about 1350 or a little later. The nesting-holes number six hundred, are in seventeen courses, and it has the revolving ladder called a potence. It stands in the middle of a large meadow, which is surrounded by the remains of an extensive moat and a very large fish-stew with another smaller pond, which were no doubt fed from the river Alne which is close at hand. The ancient church at Kinwarton is only divided from the moated area by the churchyard fence, and has some



FIG. 64.—The pigeon-house and Manor-house at Hillborough



[Pencil sketch by the author]

interesting features, including a good fourteenth-century window of oak.

According to Dugdale, the manor from Saxon times belonged to the Abbey of Evesham and in the Conqueror's Survey was held by one Ranulf, to whom succeeded another of that name, who was brother unto William, Abbot of Evesham in the time of Henry II. It seems therefore probable, as Kinwarton belonged to the Abbey till the Dissolution, that the dove-cote was built by that monastery.

The pigeon-house at Wilmcote is a rectangular edifice of limestone rubble and was no doubt originally plastered. It has two gables of oak timbers, one facing the road and the other towards the farm. In the centre of the ridge is the usual louvre hole roofed over. The building measures twenty feet by seventeen externally, and inside is fifteen feet by twelve, so the walls are only two feet six inches thick, which may account for the dangerous state which it had reached when the Birthplace Trustees repaired it. It had been for a number of years converted to various agricultural purposes, so a great many of the nesting-holes had been filled up, and the stone ledges upon which the pigeons walked had been chopped away in the lower parts of the interior walls. Now the holes have been opened again and nests made available. The lower portion of the back wall had bulged so much that it was ruinous and had to be rebuilt; there are therefore in that part no nesting-holes now.

The presence of a large and ancient pigeon-house in the farmyard at Wilmcote is an interesting fact, as it seems to be evidence that the place was a manor-house; for nobody but a Lord of the Manor or a Rector was permitted to build one. Though the birds lived to a great extent on the seeds of weeds and grass-bents, they were always liable, if not watched, to help themselves to any corn, vetches or clover that they found unprotected. It was the *droit de colombier* or right of the seigneur to keep an indefinite number of pigeons that was one of the causes which led to the French Revolution.

Harrison, in his *Description of England*, published by Holinshed in the time of Shakespeare, evidently thought that pigeons and pigeon-houses were getting too numerous.

Treating of “tame foules” he says, “pigeons, now an hurtfull foule by reason of their multitudes, and number of houses dailie erected for their increase (which the lowres of the countrie call in scorne almes houses, and dens of theeves and such like) whereof there is great plentie in everie farmers yard. They are kept there also to be sold either for readie monie in the open markets, or else to be spent at home in good companie amongst their neighbours without reprehension or fines.”¹ *Vox Populi—Grievances of the Norfolk Rebels* in 1549, says, “We pray that noman under the degré of a Knyght or esquier kepe a dowe house except it hath byn of an ould aunchyent costome.”²

THE SALT CAT

The manorial dove-cotes were in early times almost always circular towers of stone, and inside there was often a revolving ladder called a potence, which reached to the topmost row of nests. It was supported on a wooden bracket, which projected from a vertical beam standing in the middle of the floor. This beam was pivoted in the pavement at its base and also into a beam in the roof at its top. Part way up the central pole was a horizontal strut to steady the ladder, which could be pushed from nest to nest round the entire circumference of the dove-cote so that every hole could easily be reached.

On this strut was sometimes a small platform on which could be placed the “salt-cat” which was supposed to be a great attraction to the pigeons. This was a large cake, composed of clay worked up into a quantity of salt, coarse meal, cummin seed, and in medieval times a cat chopped up was generally added, and the whole baked. Whether the last ingredient was used in Shakespeare’s time I was for a long while uncertain, but the name “salt-cat” continued to be used for many years after his death in 1616. In 1633 Lord Howard of Naworth Castle paid “For 2 salte cattes for the dovecote

¹ *The Description of England*, Book III, p. 14.

² Furnivall, *Ballads from Manuscripts*, p. 149.

at Corbye, with the carriage of them, viij*s*, vjd.”¹ and ten days later, “For one salte catte for the coate at Naward, with the carriage vs.”² And in the same year “A saltcat for the dovecote cost iiijd.”³ and again paid “to Mr. Chambers his manne bringing 3 salte catts, vs.”⁴ In some Steward’s Accounts preserved at Haddon Hall, Derbyshire (a celebrated seat of the Duke of Rutland), in 1633 there is an item of one and eight pence “(ooo or 8) Pd for a salt catt for the piggions.” The ancient pigeon-house at Haddon, a square stone tower with a pyramidal roof, is still standing between the river and the road.

Doubtless “ij saltstonys for ye dowffhowse”⁵ bought for the Lestranges of Hunstanton in 1520, must have been two lumps of rock-salt. They only cost “ij ob.,” that is one half-penny each, and were probably bought at Stourbridge Fair. The Prior of Worcester in 1531 paid “for clotsalt for our picheon-howses 4d.”⁶ which was no doubt rock-salt from Droitwich. At Littlecote, the ancient mansion of the Darrells, two salt-stones for the pigeon-house were bought in 1589.⁷

Various church towers have been used as pigeon-houses. There are three instances in Worcestershire in which nesting-holes remain, also at Worcester Cathedral the tower of the great Precinct Gate was used for pigeons and in 1520 the Prior had “Item owte of ye tower of ye priory yeat (gate) of pigion—xlivij peyers.”⁸

The Prior also paid “rewards 2d, 4d, 16d, 12d, to ye taker of dove kytes &c. 6d, 4d. Then 8d, 8d.” The enemies of doves seem to have been numerous at this time, that is in 1519.⁹

In 1534 he wrote in his *Journal*:

“Md. that I had this yere owte of our pigyon hows at Crowle from ye last mikelmas till this mikelmas cccxxiiij peyer of pigyons.”¹⁰ He also notes “Md. that I had from ye

¹ Household Book of Lord. Wm. Howard of Naworth Castle.

² Ib., p. 345.

³ Ib., p. 135.

⁴ Ib., p. 135.

⁵ Household Accounts of the Lestranges of Hunstanton, *Archaeologia*, vol. xxv, p. 448.

⁶ *Journal of Prior More*, p. 346.

⁷ H. Hall, *Society in the Elizabethan Age*, p. 201.

⁸ *Journal of Prior More*, p. 130.

⁹ Ib., p. 191.

¹⁰ Ib., p. 394.

pygion-hows at Crowle from Ester last unto this Ester cxx
peyer of pigeons."¹

I had wondered if an actual cat's body was still used as an ingredient in the manufacture of a "salt-cat" as late as the time of Shakespeare, but a few years ago the question was settled in the affirmative. In a catalogue of old manuscripts received from Mr. P. M. Barnard of Tunbridge Wells was the following item: "Recipe.—Take a half dog or catt, skin them & unfoulde itt and feel [fill] them with Cummin seed & salt peter and bak [bake] it and put it into your piging [pigeon] household and upon the walls, and tak [take] some bluclay [blue clay] and mak cummin seed and salt peeter in it & worck it up like doo [dough] and make it like a sugar lofe and put it in your [pigeon] house. Salt peeter on [one] pound commin seed too pound. Probatum Est." Mr. Barnard added the comment: "The above receipt, possibly a preventive against infection, is written on the verso of the title of Holyday (Barten) A Sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, August the 5, 1634. 1626."

On receiving the above I wrote to Mr. Barnard explaining what the Recipe was about, and he replied that the gentleman who had bought the manuscript was very pleased to know what the meaning of it was. It certainly shows that this rather barbaric conceit derived from very remote times was still believed in.

As late as the days of Queen Anne the Salt-Cat, as an attraction to the pigeons, was still thought to be worth using. In "The Dictionary of all sorts of Country Affairs, printed for J. Nicholson, at the King's Arms in Little Britain. 1704" under "Pigeon" it says, "They may be fed with white Pease, Tares, and a good share of clean water; and in the Room where they lodge, you shall ever have a salt Cat for them to pick on, and that which is gathered from salt Petre is best."

"*The Practical Farmer*, printed at Lord Bacon's Head, without Temple-Bar; Thos^s Astley, at the Rose; and Stephen Austen, at the Angel & Bible in St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCC.XXXII."² recommends hempseed, "this with fresh Water and Gravel, will keep them from straying without the

¹ Page 129.

² Page 120.

Salt-cat and other contrivances. Indeed some Cummin-Seed is esteem'd very good for its Scent to be kept constantly in the Pigeon-house." In 1527 the Lestranges "pd for a pound of comyng for the dowes [doves] 4d." The *New English Dictionary* says, "Cummin, commin etc. An umbelliferous plant resembling fennel," and quotes Overbury "A wife" (1638). "His wife is the cummin seed of his Dove-house."

It was considered very desirable that the dove-house should be frequently cleaned out, old authorities say once a week, partly because the owners found that if it was neglected and became foul the pigeons would desert it. Shakespeare says, "Bees with smoke, and doves with noisome stench, Are from their hives and houses driven away."¹ Moreover, the manure was considered to be of exceptional value. Mr. E. A. B. Barnard quotes an agreement of about 1630 between Henry Izod of Stanton, Glos., and his brother concerning land belonging to Hcnry which concludes thus: "The said John is also to have the benefit of my pigeon muck to be employed upon the said Henry's land."² In the churchwardens' accounts of Long Melford, Suffolk, in 1680 is an item which shows that the *Vicar* bought "the Pigeon dung out of the steple" for 2^s 6^d from the Wardens.³

Behind the manor-house at Shottery a fine old dove-cote stands at the angle of a walled kitchen garden. It is a square building of stone, and some of the original plaster remains. The pyramidal tiled roof is surmounted by a picturesque and moderately ancient erection of wood, which has numerous holes for the convenience of the pigeons. (Fig. 61.)

This Shottery pigeon-house is in good condition within, but the addition of a wooden floor some centuries ago, to convert the lower part into a tool-house, makes it difficult to count the nests. The walls are twenty-six inches thick, and each side is sixteen feet wide externally. The holes vary in depth from sixteen to nineteen inches. Nearly all ancient pigeon-holes are more or less L-shaped in order to provide

¹ *I Henry VI*, Act I, Sc. 2.

² E. A. B. Barnard, F.S.A., *Stanton and Snowshill*, pp. 71-72.

³ Parker, *History of Long Melford*, p. 108.



FIG. 61.—Pigeon-house at Shottery Manor

more room and more privacy for the birds, and of course were built *with* the walls.

A dove-cote at the manor-house of Wasperton, a small village between Charlecote and Warwick, is of very un-



FIG. 63.—Wasperton pigeon-house



FIG. 62.—Part of Wasperton pigeon-house

[To face page 234]

common design. The lower part is built of large blocks of grey sandstone and its very tall superstructure is of red brick. The plan is octagonal, and I should think the only one of that shape in the county. The roof of old red tiles is also octagonal, but has a square cover over its louvre-hole. When a friend of mine saw it in the eighties of the last century, it was apparently in a very fair condition (Fig. 62), but it has since become terribly cracked (Fig. 63). That something may shortly be done to save it is greatly to be hoped.

Between Binton and Bidford, not far from the Avon, is the fine old manor-house of Great Hillborough and at the edge of a large pond, and a few yards into a very large field stands a circular stone building of huge dimensions, obviously the manorial pigeon-house. It has a circumference of a hundred feet, is said to hold nine hundred and ninety-nine nesting-holes, and its walls are three feet two inches thick. It is built of large blocks of the local grey stone. The walls are fifteen feet high to the wall-plate, but are somewhat dwarfed by the enormous height of the conical roof of tiles, which is crowned by an octagonal latticed turret of wood. (Fig. 64).

Within it has suffered various changes. The doorway has been considerably raised so as to allow the farmer to walk comfortably through it. Inside there is against the wall a blacksmith's forge and in the centre a tall brick column which, supporting an umbrella-like floor, divides off the upper part of the original dove-house to accommodate a much reduced number of pigeons, and allowing the lower part to be used for other purposes. It is now crammed to the door with various implements, large wooden troughs, etc., so that it is not easy to study in detail.

Dugdale says of Hillborough, "This having been antiently given to the Monks of Evesham, but wrested from them in the Saxons Time, was soon after the Norman Conquest enjoyed by Urso de Abetot & Osbernus fil. Ricardi,"¹ but he afterwards traces it to the possession of Bordesley Abbey. This Osbert fitz Richard was also lord of Richard's Castle in Herefordshire, where there is still a very fine circular pigeon-

¹ *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1745, p. 506.

house of very early date.¹ Dugdale also says that the greatest part of what Osbernus fil Ricardi had there at Hillborough came to the ancestors of the Hubaut family whose descendants he says "have successively continued Lords this Man-nour."² They were still possessed of it at the time of his writing, about 1650.

A fine old dove-cote, of good grey masonry, has recently been destroyed near Stratford. About two miles lower down the Avon than Hillborough, but on the opposite side of it, is the picturesque old hamlet of Barton. To reach it one must traverse the Stratford to Evesham road as far as Bidford's ancient bridge of eight stone arches. After crossing it, the black and white timber houses of Barton are visible about a mile away, and at the far end of the village was an ancient dove-cote or pigeon-house of stone. The manor-house which doubtless originally owned it, stands in the village street, but the dove-cote was on the opposite side of the road in an orchard and close to the edge of the Avon. It was a tall rectangular building of grey stone with a gabled roof of old tiles when I took a rich man to look at it, hoping that he would repair the roof which the owner who lives in an old timbered house near to it was not able to do. But he only made an absurd offer to buy the whole property, and the owner has since sold most of the stone so that the grand old pigeon-house is now reduced to a miserable-looking low shed with a corrugated iron roof. There are a great many timber and plaster pigeon-houses in Worcestershire and they must also have been numerous in Warwickshire, but I only know of one example, that at Songar Grange three miles north-east of Wilmcote. It is a very large one built on a square granary which is resting on a series of brick pillars.

¹ This is now scheduled as an ancient monument.

² *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1745, p. 506.

Chapter XI

Robert Arden's Inventory

SOME personal detail concerning Robert Arden is to be gathered from his will and the will of his second wife, and from the two inventories that occur with them.

The first inventory has always been accepted as giving a list of everything of which he died possessed. This, however, for reasons given later, I believe it cannot have done. The deciding of this question is of great importance, because so many writers have assumed that whatever was absent from this inventory the Arden family must have lacked.

It has the usual conventional heading "The Ynventory of all the goodes moveable and unmoveable of Robert Ardennes of Wyllmote late desseside," and in the conviction that it is literally all that it professes to be, very surprising and far-reaching statements have been made. In this belief Halliwell-Phillipps asserted that the Arden family lived more like pigs than human beings; and other commentators have suggested that, as there was only one bed mentioned, the seven daughters must have slept on sacks of straw, the rest of their house-keeping being of a similarly squalid description. Statements and assumptions such as these are so numerous that it is impossible to quote more than a small proportion of them; nor does it seem necessary, because all who have taken an interest in Shakespeare and his career must be familiar with many of them.

Halliwell-Phillipps said in all his numerous editions, "The Inventory of Robert Arden's goods which was taken shortly after his death in 1556, enables us to realize the kind of life that was followed by the poet's mother during her girlhood.

In the total absence of books or means of intellectual education, her acquirements must have been restricted to an experimental knowledge of matters connected with the farm and its house. There can be no doubt that the maiden with the pretty name, she who has been so often represented as a nymph of the forest communing with nothing less aesthetic than a nightingale or a waterfall, spent most of her time in the homeliest of rustic employments, and it is not at all improbable that in common with many other farmers' daughters of the period she occasionally assisted in the more robust occupations of the field. He goes on to say, in a round-about sentence, that she probably had an exceptionally healthy and vigorous frame, or she could not "have been the parent of a Shakespeare," a theory which seems to infer that great poets are always born of very muscular mothers! Again, he continues:

"Of her personal character or social gifts nothing whatever is known, but it would be a grave error to assume that the rude surroundings of her youth were incompatible with the possession of a romantic temperament and the highest form of subjective refinement. Existence, indeed, was passed in her father's house in some respects, we should now say, rather after the manner of pigs than that of human beings. Many of the articles that are considered necessaries in the humblest of modern cottages were not to be seen—there were no table-knives, no forks, no crockery. The food was manipulated on flat pieces of stout wood, too insignificant in value to be catalogued, and whatever there may have been to supply the places of spoons or cups were no doubt roughly formed of the same material; but some of the larger objects, such as kitchen pans, may have been of pewter or latten. The means of ablution were lamentably defective, if, indeed, they were not limited to what could have been supplied by an isolated pail of water, for what were called towels were merely used for wiping the hands after a meal, and there was not a single wash-hand basin in the establishment. As for the inmate and other labourers, it was very seldom indeed, if ever, that they either washed their hands or combed their hair, nor is there the least reason for suspecting that those accomplishments

were in liberal requisition in the dwellings of their employers."¹

These nauseating imputations, the last sentence especially, give a characteristic example of Halliwell-Phillipps's style of argument. He states that a well-to-do franklin who was born in the fifteenth century and had a wife and seven daughters, employed labourers who seldom if ever washed their hands or combed their hair, and that there is no reason for supposing that their employers were any cleaner in their habits. In support of this staggering statement he produces one instance of an author who had written about the year 1558: "Plaine people in the countrey, as carters, threshers, ditchers, colliers² and plowmen use seldom times to washe their hands, as apereth by their filthiness and as very few times combe their heades, as it is seen by floxe, myttes, grese, fethers, strawe, and suche lyke, which hangeth in their heares." Halliwell-Phillipps, then, would have us believe that a substantial freeholder, the owner of several groups of houses and three small estates, had the same habits of life as those of the men he employed, who would be lower in their status than the villeins, who were a kind of serf, and who were, or had been only a short time before, attached to the land, and liable to be bought and sold with it. He considered that the franklin would have the same habits as the cottar. These emphatic statements of the poet's most popular biographer having been a prominent feature of his celebrated *Outlines*, it seems well worth while to analyse them, especially as they have been so often quoted, and so many tall sophistical skyscrapers have been built upon them.

"By a deed of May, 1527, Roger Lupton granted £600 to St. John's College, Cambridge, for six scholars to be incorporated among the other scholars of the College. . . . They were to be born in England, sons of freemen (*libere conditionis*), a striking late testimony against the notion that colleges and schools were intended for the working classes who were still mostly villeins."³

In 1576 Queen Elizabeth enfranchised a hundred of the

¹ *Outlines*, vol. i, pp. 27-29.

² Colliers were generally charcoal-burners.

³ Leach, *The Schools of Mediaeval England*, p. 294.

"bondmen and bondwomen in blood with All or any their children and sequelles as be bondmen to any of her Manors" in the Duchy of Lancaster.¹

Why should Mary Arden have been dubbed illiterate—because she signed with a mark? She was born of comparatively rich parents in the parish of Aston Cantlow. There was no difficulty about education in her childhood, education was free, though roads in wet weather were bad, but girls and boys rode regularly on horseback and would, if necessary, go five or six miles with ease. There were grammar schools at Coughton and Alcester, while at Bishopton the curate, the Rev. John Marshall, "who died not young in 1607 had besides a learned library a quantity of juvenile school books."²

At the parish church of Aston Cantlow there was a Guild which maintained chantry priests, and chantry priests often taught children in the church. At Stratford on Avon a school had been kept in the Guild Chapel, but as the corporation became more Puritanical it was ordered not to be held there.

In Chapter VII I have shown that schools were numerous.

TRENCHERS

One statement that Halliwell-Phillipps makes is quite true: the family certainly did eat from wooden trenchers, or as he characteristically puts it, they "manipulated their food on flat pieces of wood." It is true also that there were no forks because they were not generally used in England till later. Of course there was no "crockery," as it was not in ordinary use till more than two centuries after Robert Arden's time. He might also have added that there were no rosewood "whatnots" or puce and emerald-green "antimacassars."

It is not true, however, to say that trenchers were "too insignificant in value to be catalogued." Such things were very often catalogued in the sixteenth-century inventories and in much later ones too. In two, which Halliwell-Phillipps himself printed, one gives the possessions of a rich Stratford inn-holder in 1602, "vijij dossen trenchers" valued at xvjd., and

¹ *Tudor Economic Documents*, vol. i, p. 71.

² *Stokes, Shakespeare's Environment*, p. 57.

"Twoe greate tryne [i.e. treen] platters" at xx d.¹ These being second-hand were cheap, but in a shop at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1593 "xx gros of trenchers" were reckoned at £3 6s. 8d. and "xl gros of course trencheres" at £4.² These being in the shop must have been new ones. In ordinary inventories they are frequently catalogued with other objects, so that their value is not then exactly discernible. In the buttery of Ralph Lambton of Lainbton in the County of Durham there were in the year 1593 among many pieces of pewter "vij doseyn of rounde trenchers vj dosenn of square trenchers, xij little stone potes, j great stone pote, vij woode kannes" and a few other things which were valued at £3. There were also "in the kitchinge ij boxes of round case trenchers"; these doubtless were the small and thin sort which we now call roundels, and which were generally painted with patterns and mottoes.

We know that the early trenchers were square, because in Shute's *Architecture*, printed in 1563, he says, "The Abacus that lieth uppн Voluta, is iust 4 square, flat like to a trencher."³ It is noteworthy, too, that the square mortar-board cap still worn by scholars was called the "trencher-cap."

No doubt a great many of them were simply square slabs of wood like those still used at Winchester College, but the best kind were not so thick, were most skilfully made, and had a shallow depression occupying most of the central part, with a small hollow for salt in one of the corners. (See Fig. 65.) For great personages, this kind was sometimes made of silver or silver-gilt. In inventories of the Royal Castles at Edinburgh in 1542 it is shown that King James V had "Item twa truncheouris gilt, with saltfattis in the nuikis of thame. Item ane trencheor with ane saltfatt in the nuik of it ourgilt," and such trenchers of silver are numerous in this inventory.⁴

In the Household of King Henry VIII trenchers were used,

¹ Inventory of Thomas Dixon, alias Waterman, inn-holder, made in 1602. Also in the inventory of Alexander Webbe's goods in 1573, which he printed at the end of vol. ii of the *Outlines*, "trenchers" are mentioned.

² Surtees Society, vol. 38, p. 236.

³ Ainsworth's *Latin Dictionary*, 1832, translates "Quadra, ae: 1. a square—2, a square trencher."

⁴ *Collection of Inventories of the Royal Wardrobe, etc., Edinburgh, 1815*, p. 104.

while Robert Arden was living at Wilmcote in 1529. "Itm the same laste daye of Decembr paied to the S'geant of the pantrye for certen trenchars for the king xxiijs. iiijd."¹

"Item the furste day paied to thomas dawson upon a bille subscribed by the sergeant of the pantry for 24 dousin of trenchers xls." And again in 1532,² "paied to dawson one of the m'shalls of the King's halle for xx dousin trenchars deliv'd to the Kings pantrye. xxxijs. iiijd."³

Even in the reign of Charles II the fastidious Samuel Pepys more than one hundred years after the death of Robert Arden, kept his silver on the "cup board" and ate off wooden plates. The entry in his Diary on December 7, 1666, says, "and so home to dinner where finding the cloth laid and much crumpled but clean, I grew angry and flung the trenchers about the room, and in a mighty heat I was: so a clean cloth was laid and my poor wife very patient, and so to dinner, and in came Mistress Barbara Sheldon, now Mrs. Wood, and dined with us, she mighty fine and lives I perceive very happily." On another occasion, on January 4, 1667, it seems that he and his friends looked at the silver vessels and drank from a wooden one; having at a supper party at his own house "a flagon of ale and apples drunk out of a wood cup, as a Christmas draught which made all merry; and they full of admiration at my plate."

On October 29, 1663, he had dined at the Guildhall on Lord Mayor's Day, but inserts a grumble in his Diary, "It was very unpleasing that we had no napkins or change of trenchers." It is noteworthy that he had no objection to manipulating his food on flat pieces of wood, but complains that there were not more of them.

At the delightful old town of Abingdon-on-Thames there are fifteen dozen of beautifully made square wooden trenchers, with salt vats in the nooks of them which, with two dozen others that were considered too worm-eaten to be preserved, were discovered at the Guildhall there, all of which in past times were used for the civic feasts. There are also about a score of round trenchers, and a great quantity of pewter

¹ *Privy Purse Expenses of King Henry VIII*, p. 14.

² Ib., p. 108.

³ Ib., p. 243.



FIG. 65.—Wooden trenchers with salt vats, also a large treen dish

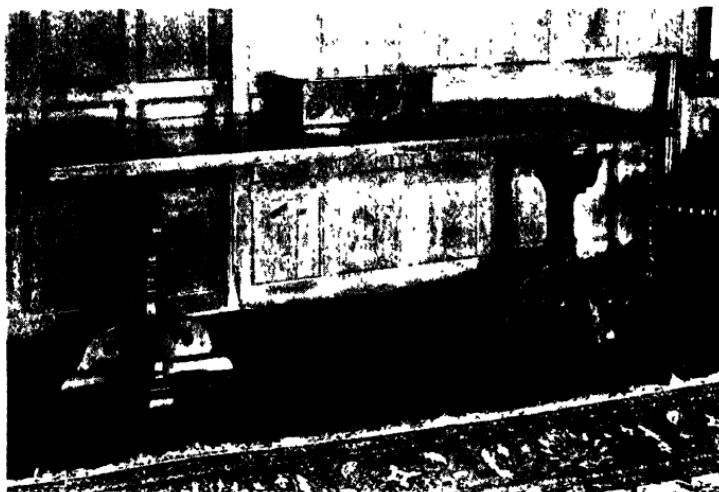


FIG. 65A.—Early trestle table, from Haselor Manor-house

plates, together with an enormous charger which measures 28 inches across and weighs 33 pounds.

At the Bablake Hospital, a beautiful old timber building in Coventry, which has carved fireplaces and old panelled rooms, in past times used as a school, a friend who lives at Halford remembers seeing a group of schoolboys scraping trenchers in the playground. And Miss Mary Dormer Harris, who kindly wrote to an old boy for me, received a postcard as follows: "Bablake School and Trenchers. A generous diet of beef and mutton was served on wooden trenchers until the appointment of Miss Cramp as Matron in 1875. The trenchers were obtained from Yorkshire, but what became of the three dozen or more in use I do not know."

Trenchers in the Middle Ages were made of coarse bread in slices and the name was derived from the old French word *trancher*, to cut off. In the Household of Edward IV, under the "Office of Bakhouse," it is ordered that "there shall be no blacke brede but for trenchours or houndes."¹

In the *Computus* of Winchester College those made of wood did not appear till 1416, when "Ten dozen trenchers (disci lignei)" cost 2s. 7d.²

The Editor of Dekker's *Gull's Hornbook* reprinted in 1812, says, "Their use was continued to the time of Charles I and much longer in colleges, and many publick societies: I believe, that in term time, at some of the inns of court the benchers still eat off them."³

I have heard old people say that when the newfangled crockery ware began to supersede the plates of wood and pewter, many people extremely disliked them because the noise of the earthenware plates, and the scratching of the knife on the flinty surface of the glazed table-ware, was so painful after the noiselessness of the trenchers and the silken softness of the pewter, and set their teeth on edge.

¹ *Ordinances and Regulations for the Royal Household*, printed by the Society of Antiquaries, 1790.

² Kirby, *Annals of Winchester College*, p. 85.

³ Page 45, footnote.

ROBERT'S WILL

In July 1550 Robert Arden made two settlements of the Snitterfield property, probably at the time of his second marriage. "In the first he devised estates at Snitterfield in trust to Adam Palmer and Hugh Porter, for the benefit of his three married daughters Agnes, Joan and Katherine, after the death of himself and his wife. In the second, a similar deed in favour of three other daughters—Margaret (then married to Alexander Webbe of Bearley), Joyce and Alice. Mary is not mentioned, probably because the Asbies estate was even then devoted to her."¹

The will also suggests that his wife was living at the copyhold farm, which he arranged she should share with his daughter Alice. "Allso I gyve and bequeythe to Annes my wife viij. xijs. iiijd. apone this condysione, that [she] shall sofer my dowghter Ales quyetlye to ynyoye halfe my copy-houlde in Wyllmecote dwryng the tyme of her wyddowehodde and if she will nott soffer my dowghter Ales quyetlye to occupye halfe with her, then I will that my wife shall have butt iiiij.li. vjs. viijd. and her gintur [jointure] in Snyterfylde."

Evidently Agnes Arden did suffer her stepdaughter Alice quietly to enjoy half of the copyhold, because when Agnes died at Wilmcote only half of the crops in the fields and half the corn, peas and beans in the barns were valued as being hers: in her will she left to her son John Hill "my parte and Moitie of my croppē in the fields," but she left nothing to her stepdaughters nor to any of the Shakespeares.

The terms in which Robert's will is couched, embodying as they do a serious threat to his wife if she does not agree to share the copyhold farm with his daughter Alice, indicates a state of dissension in the family. It also shows that he was taking sides with his daughters. Moreover, his wife's will confirms the same impression. The wording of Robert's will, especially the word "quietly," seems to suggest that matters had not been any too quiet in the Arden family, and the whole of the will gives one the impression that it was being written in the presence of some of his daughters but not in

¹ Stopes, *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 37.

the presence of his wife. Had she been there he would have known if she would allow Alice to share the farm. Robert was seriously ill. He died only about three weeks after making the will in which he had stated that he was sick in body but good and perfect in remembrance.

I think that when he began to feel ill, or more probably before, he had gone to the Asbies messuage where it seems likely his unmarried daughters were living and the furniture of his father Thomas possibly remained. I get this impression to some extent, first from a study not only of the will but also of the inventory attached to it, a strange and puzzling document, which demands our close attention. Old inventories, of course, differ in various respects from one another, some have gone into great detail, in others the items are fewer and are bunched together. But they all have features which are almost invariable; at the beginning, for instance, there ought to be a list of the honest and indifferent men who have appraised the goods. Though Robert Arden's inventory says it was "made the ixth day of December, in the thyrde and the forthe years of the reygne of our sovereyne lorde and ladye Phylipe and Marye, kyng and quene &c.," yet it does not say who made it.

Secondly, though it calls itself "The Ynventory of all the goodes moveable and unmoveable of Robert Ardennes of Wyllmcote late desseside," there is not a single item valued of unmovable possessions, such as buildings or land or leases, everything specified is movable, so it is wrongly described and not what it professes to be.

Thirdly, there are a number of items which would naturally occur in an inventory of a man of even very moderate means which are absent from this one. In all sixteenth-century inventories that give a real account of a man's belongings, one of the most important things mentioned is "Imprimis his apparell." At that time clothing was expensive and being hand-spun, hand-woven and hand-stitched could be worn for years, was frequently bequeathed to friends or relatives,¹ and in the

¹ In the will of Wm. Cowley, 1580, "to John Browne, the cowper, my yealowe britches, to Robert Potter, the jerkin and britches I do weare everie daye."—Surtees Society, *Wills and Inventories*, vol. iii, p. 85.

early part of the century sometimes left to the Church to be made into vestments. Where, then, was Robert Arden's clothing? Even Halliwell-Phillipps would not suggest that it was not worth cataloguing. His widow's apparel was valued at fifty shillings, a large sum, though she was old and had been described in a document of 1580 as "aged and impotent."¹ It was considerably more than the wain and wain gears, plough and plough gears, cart and cart gears, which were 30s.²

Fourthly, in order to be like an ordinary inventory, it ought to have a list of the debts which at his death the deceased owed, and who they were owing to; with another list showing the amounts which were owing to him and the names of the debtors. Also there would be a statement of the money that he had in the house and that in his purse, but none of these appear. Yet he must have had debts. He must have had money owing to him. He must have had money in his house. He must have had clothing, and clothing was valuable.

Again, although cart and cart gears, plough and plough-gears, with harrows are noted and are priced, nothing is said about saddles or bridles, bits, halters, pack-saddles or pillions. There were eight oxen, two bullocks, seven cows, and four weaning calves. Also four horses and three colts. The eight oxen were necessary to turn the stiff soil at Wilmcote, and as oxen were constantly used to draw the wagons the horses would generally be available for riding and for carrying packs. We can be sure that the seven daughters could and did ride, but would sometimes travel seated behind their father or servant on the pillion.

Whatever the object of the inventory known as Robert Arden's, it is clear from the omissions that it cannot be regarded as giving a list of everything of which he died possessed. If the widow or Robert's executors were responsible for that statement, one has to remember that in compiling an inventory for probate there was a temptation to put down no more than it was thought would answer the expectations of the Diocesan officials.

The late Edward Peacock in the Introduction to some

¹ *Stratford Miscellaneous Papers*. Also printed in *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 45.

² See Appendix.

inventories of the goods of Sir William and Sir Thomas Fairfax, says: "It is perhaps needless to point out that inventories of this sort here printed are much rarer and far more interesting than those compiled for purposes of probate. In papers of the latter kind no more information is commonly given than was needed to satisfy the authorities. Those before us were made for a purely domestic purpose, that the owner might know what household goods he was possessed of and what cattle he had on his farms."¹

Also a will and inventory written in 1572, not long after those of Robert Arden, indicates that the inventory of a deceased man's property was not by any means necessarily a complete list of the goods that he left. A certain John Franklin of Coken in Durham wrote at the end of his will these instructions: "I will and in gods behafe do charge and com-annde that some honest and substancyall men to take vew of all my goods catall corne leases and Jewells or what so eu' it be y^t was myne and the same beyng p'fytelye vewed & dyscretlye consydered vpon I will yt they shall praise the same and eu'y p'te & P'cell there of to the full value to the best and vttermost of ther knowleage: And I will vpon Gods behafe most hertlye desyre my derelye belovyd Wif that she will brynge to lyght all such thyngs as were myne that the same may be praysed accordynge to this my last wyll and testament as I doute nothyng but she will."

The 1556 Inventory is obviously not what the heading states it to be, and so there arises the important question of what goods is it a list? In my opinion it may have been originally an inventory of furniture and necessaries which were left at the copyhold farm by Robert Arden for the use of his wife, he having gone to live with his daughters at Asbies.

We know that Robert Arden requested his second wife to share the copyhold farm with his daughter Alice; may not the 1556 Inventory be a list of the goods left there at that time—a residuum after his departure? Inventories of goods handed over to sons are to be found fairly frequently, but if that is the kind it was, the widow may have thought

¹ *Archaeologia*, xlvi, December 1883.

herself justified in asking a friend to add the list of animals, and to place prices to the whole, so that she could send it to Worcester.

Something of the sort seems to have happened to the inventory of Robert Arden, and the idea is supported by the curious similarity between it and Agnes Arden's own list of goods.

In order to make this more clear, I have put the two lists together in parallel columns, but it is not possible to compare the prices, as the items are bunched together differently.

ROBERT ARDEN
Inventory 1556

In the hall
2 table-boards
3 chairs
2 forms
1 cupboard
2 cushions
3 benches
1 little table
shelves
2 painted cloths in the hall &
5 painted cloths

In the chamber
2 coffers
7 pairs of sheets
5 table-cloths
2 towells
1 dyeper towel
1 feather bed
2 mattresses
8 canvasses, 1 coverlet
3 bolsters 1 pillow
4 painted cloths
1 which (a chest)

In the kitchen
4 pots
4 pans
2 caldrons

AGNES ARDEN
Inventory 1581

In the hall
2 table-boards
other forms
1 cupboard
3 cushions
benches
shelves
1 painted cloth
3 coffers
Her apparel
The bedding and bedsteads with
apreeware (that is textiles such
as were made at Ypres).
1 piece of woollen cloth

In the kitchen
3 pots of brass
2 brass pans
2 calderons

ROBERT ARDEN
Inventory 1556

In the kitchen

3 candle-sticks
1 basin 1 chafing dish,
2 skillets
1 frying-pan
1 gridiron
pot hangings with pot hooks
one broche (spit)
1 pair of cobbards
1 axe, 1 bill 4 augurs,
2 hatchets an adze, a mattock,
1 iron crow
1 vat, 4 barrels
4 pails
1 quern (mill)
1 kneading trough
a long saw
a hand saw

AGNES ARDEN
Inventory 1581

In the kitchen

3 candle sticks
2 pieces of pewter
2 salts
1 fire shovel
pot hooks with links for the same
2 broches (spits)
1 pair of cobbards
the cooperic ware sieves & 1
strike
1 malt-mill
1 kneading trough

FURNITURE IN THE HALL

Taking "Robert Arden's Inventory" item by item, the first is "in the halle, ij table-bordes, iij chayeres, ij formes, one cobbourde, ij coshenes, iij benches, and one lytle table with shellves, prisede att viijs."

The price indicates that none of these pieces of furniture were very fine ones, and they were no doubt of a simple late Gothic type. As in earlier times a table had been called a "board," a picture having been called a "table," these two were entered as "table-boards" to prevent mistakes during the transition from the one name to the other, and to make it clear that they were tables in the later sense of the word. In 1556 the table with a frame was becoming usual, but as there is no probability that these Wilmcote table-bordes were new, each would consist of a loose top laid upon a pair of trestles, which was the kind usual in the early part of the sixteenth century. The tops were always loose, so that they could be taken down and placed against the walls, when the hall was wanted for dancing or games. Capulet says, "Come, musicians,

play. A hall,—a hall! give room and foot it, girls—More light, you knaves; and turn the tables up.”¹

The trestles of these later tables were sometimes joined by a central bar, and occasionally they were carved or moulded. Some years ago there was a rather small one of that sort in the scullery of the manor-house at Haselor, a few miles from Wilmcote, which table is now at the Lygon Arms at Broadway. (Fig 65A.)

At Baddesley Clinton Hall is an extremely fine one twenty-one feet long, the top two inches thick and two feet eight inches wide. It is supported on four great carved trestles united by a central beam. In 1444 John Brompton a merchant of Beverley left to his son, “a long table for the upper part of the hall with three carved trestles, with another table called a table dormant in the hall and with another table with trestles in the common parlour.”²

In later times “a table with a frame” was more usual, that is, the table had an oak top which was laid on a set of four legs joined at the upper part by strong rails often carved or moulded, and near to the floor another set of thicker rails on which those sitting at it would often rest their feet. It has been asserted that the floors of Tudor and mediaeval halls and living-rooms were often so wet and dirty that the rails were intended to keep the feet of those who sat at them from contact with the rushes with which the rooms were strewn. It is true that there has been for many years an oft-repeated statement that the floor below the dais was called the “marsh” of the hall. This theory, however, is difficult to believe, it is founded on one sentence in Hudson-Turner’s *Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages*: “The space below the dais was sometimes called the marsh of the hall; and it was doubtless often damp and dirty enough to deserve the name.” This is based only on one extract from a Latin document of 1308–9, as follows: “Et in marisco in aula j. tabula cum trestellis, precii xij.”³

This passage, however, does not necessarily mean “marsh.”

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Sc. 5.

² longam tabulam pro superiore parte aulae cum tribus kerven tristes . . . cum alia tabula vocata dormount in aula et cum alia tabula cum tristes in le parlour cotidiana.

³ *Rot. de Terris Templariorum* (1), A.D. 1308–9.

Looking up the word in a number of old Latin dictionaries, in most of them the word "marsh" is not mentioned. In *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae* dated 1565, mariscum is translated as "A kinde of bulrushes." The word bulrush did not mean then the kind of rush to which we give that name now. It meant the smooth dark bluish-green kind that grows in most of our sluggish rivers. A Dictionary of 1619 gives "Mariscum vel mariscus. The smooth rush." Dr. Adam Littleton's Latin Dictionary, 1715, says "A kind of bulrush whereof they made mats and fishing weels. Plin." In Ducange, however, mariscum is translated marsh.

One cannot expect the Latin of a fourteenth-century inventory to be exact in its descriptions, but I believe that this extract quoted by Hudson-Turner was intended to mean that the table was in the part of the hall that was strewn with rushes, the dais having rush-matting which was a more expensive covering than loose rushes, and which was always called "mat."

In many old full-length portraits the floor is covered with it; for instance, in a portrait of Queen Elizabeth when she was a young girl she is represented as standing on that kind of rush matting, so also is the portrait of the Earl of Southampton in the Stratford Memorial Gallery, and a great many more of such Tudor portraits.

The kind of rush that was used does not grow in the swift running rivers of the North, but in the Fen country they were plentiful. In the Household Book of Lord Wm. Howard of Naworth in November 1619 "vj bundles of mattes out of Norfolk conteyning 6 yards a peece xvijjs, and for carriage of them to Lin, ijs." That is, to King's Lynn, where they would be shipped down the river to the North Sea, and so to the Tyne at Newcastle. They would ascend the river as far as it was navigable, and would then be only a moderate journey by pack horse to Naworth.

Rush matting was used also in churches to lay along the altar rails, for communicants to kneel upon. In the Rolls of Durham Abbey 1596-7, p. 740, is "Item for two great mattes ye on for ye pue in ye quire and ye other for ye gentle-women to knell on at morning prayer ijs viijd."

In 1593, at St. Martin's, Leicester, "8d was payd to goodman Kyrke for two mats for formes to the Communion table."¹ "For x yards of newe matt for the Comonicautes to kneele vpon, 5s" was paid at St. Edmund Sarum in 1622.² In 1625 at St. Mary's, Cambridge, 4s. 6d. was paid "For 18 yards of matt for the parishioners to kneele on at the Comunion."³ In 1638 at All Saints', Derby, "For Mattinge and rushes in ye chancell to kneele on, 5s 3d."⁴

There was one of these communion mats, a very fine one, at Huddington Church in Worcestershire, eighteen miles from Stratford, but it was thrown out when the church was "restored." Another I found in the Gallery of the Guild Chapel in Stratford, and as it was being trampled on by the Grammar School boys, persuaded the authorities to put it in the New Place Museum near by.

Mr. Fred Roe argues that not only the rails of the tables, but also those of the chairs, were intended to support the feet of the users. He says: "It is to the deplorable state of uncleanliness of the rush-strewn floors of our forefathers that we are indebted for the cross-rails which form a foot-rest on not only our early tables but also our chairs. Rails were, in chairs of the Elizabethan period, extended round the framework at an equal height of some couple of inches or so from the floor."⁵

Mr. Fred Roe thinks that rushes were dirty and repulsive, but that depended on the people who used them. They were, for instance, as I have shown previously, used to cover the floors in palaces and great mansions. In Tudor and Stuart times the English people did not live up to the standard of cleanliness which their descendants now think necessary, but there is no probability that the makers of ancient tables ever dreamed of the lower rails of their oaken frames being used to keep the feet of the diners from contact with the rush-strewn floor. After trestle tables had become obsolete in the middle of the sixteenth century, "the table with a frame"

¹ Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 104.

² *Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Edmund and St. Thomas, Sarum*, p. 175.

³ Ib., p. 105.

⁴ Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 105.

⁵ Fred Roe, *Old Oak Furniture*, p. 83.



FIG. 67.—Arm-chair of joined work
(Collection of Laurence J. Cadbury)

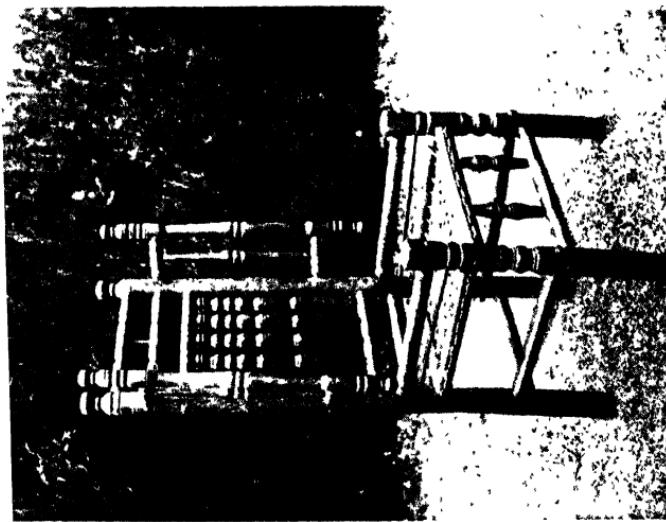


FIG. 66.—Turned or thrown chair
(Collection of the Rev. F. Meyrick-Jones)

which succeeded them invariably had "the framework of bars connecting the legs." It was a necessity of the construction of such tables and without these bars such a table would be a miserable-looking object, and the legs would have become loose in their mortices.

The early chairs and also the tables made when floors were most likely to be dirty, have no rails on which feet could be placed. The chairs are generally boxed in when depicted in old stained glass or carvings, and the tables were on trestles.

CHAIRS

Robert Arden's chairs would probably be of the kind called "turned" or "thrown" chairs which had stays, legs and backs of turned rails, sometimes ornamental but often very simple; some had three legs and a triangular seat. The Ordinances of the Guild of Turners in London show that they made many turned chairs. In 1688 it was agreed "For avoiding faulty commodities from divers places in the Realm and other Countries to the City of London, to be sold to the great slander of the Misticrie, no persons shall buy any chairs until they be searched and viewed by the Master & Wardens."¹ (Fig. 66.)

"Turned chairs" are generally ascribed to the time of Henry VIII or earlier, but apart from the above evidence they are often described in Elizabethan documents as "thrown chairs." In the *Shuttleworth Accounts* "12d. was paid" to the "dish-thrower, ij days makinge of a chere xij" in 1605.² No doubt they were made in the Middle Ages also. A turned chair of that sort found in the cellar of Lord Leicester's Hospital at Warwick is called a Saxon chair because it resembles the design of the chairs which are depicted in pre-Norman MSS., but it is not older than 1500 at the earliest.

Of course there were chairs which were made of "joined work," that is with mortice and tenon, and those were only allowed to be made by the Joiners. (Fig. 67.) Good examples of these of the time of Thomas and Robert Arden are illus-

¹ A. C. Stanley-Stone, *History of the Worshipful Company of Turners*, p. 265.

² Page 160.

trated at Figs. 18 and 19, the one from Abington and the other from Norbury.

In addition to the chairs, the presence of two forms and three benches would account for the absence of any stools. The stool of the first half of the sixteenth century, to which the Arden furniture would belong, was made from boards by the Carpenters (see Fig. 68), who were not allowed to do any "joined" work. The "joint stool" (a corruption of joined stool) was made by the craft of Joiners. (See Fig. 69.)

The two forms would be used for sitting at the tables, and the benches probably had backs of wood. No doubt the two cushions were long ones lying on the two benches. Cushions were generally made of tapestry, with sheep leather on the under side.

The "cabbourde" in the hall must not be confused with the pair of "cobbarde" which were in the kitchen.¹ It must have been either a "high cupboard" with doors, which before the date of this inventory had been known as an almery or aumbry, or it might have been a three-storied cupboard, the forerunner of the seventeenth-century "*cwpbwrrd tridarn*" which lingered in North Wales well into the eighteenth century. Also it may have been a low kind known as a Court Cupboard, from the French word *court*, i.e. "short." This was a low "board" or table on which to place the cups of silver or pewter; generally these were open, always three-storeyed and generally had no doors. There is an early example at the Arden house at Wilmcote. (Fig. 70.)

The little table which is entered together with shelves, was probably a round one with the plain legs united at the top with a triangle of rails, and near the bottom more rails of similar shape.

SHELVES—PAINTED CLOTHS—SHEETS

The shelves would be hanging on the walls. Most old houses and cottages had such sets of shelves on the walls of their rooms till recent times, generally a little ornamentally

¹ These were iron racks for roasting-spits.



FIG. 68.—Two tables and a chest of Henry VII date

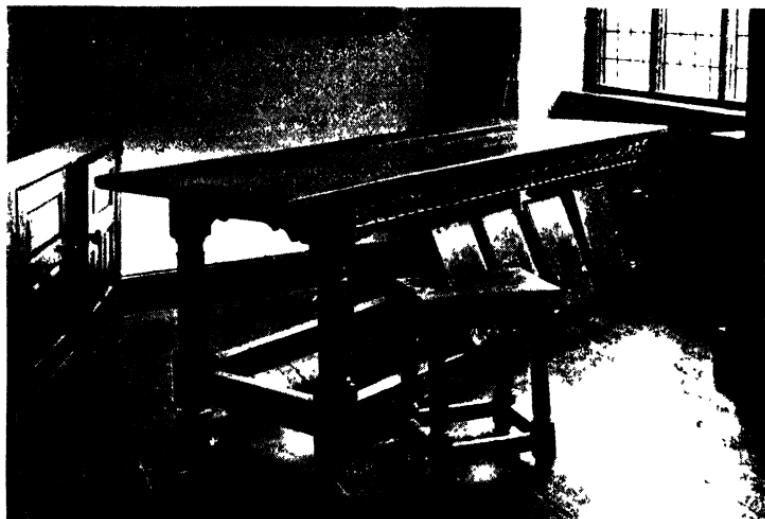


FIG. 69.—Set of carved stools to fit under carved table of the same pattern
(Collection of Laurence J. Cadbury)

shaped, and useful to hold pewter plates and dishes as well as trenchers.

Painted cloths I have dealt with in Chapter VI; it is probable that the two mentioned as being in the hall were hung along the length of two of the walls. Of the five in the chamber, one was probably forming the back of a four-post bed, another was the celour or tester, that is the roof, and the other three were curtains round the sides. In 1573 Alexander Webbe, Robert Arden's brother-in-law, had "Item the paynted clothes about the beddes."¹ Master Henry Wager of Snitterfield left in 1558 two painted cloths in the Hall, and others "abowte the beddes in the Chambers."² Master Robert Perdy in 1559 had "ye paynted clothes yt ys a bowtt ye beddes."³ In the inventory of William Bracy in 1556-7 there were "peynted clothes & one Ambrey in the Halle, onc bedde, wt peynted clothes A bowtt ij other beddes."⁴

Seven pair of sheets might have been either flaxen or hemp. There was a kind of more elaborately dressed fibre which was made into hempen sheets and were called "tere sheets," therefore it becomes manifest that Doll Tear-sheet's name was a piece of *double entendre*. I have seen five examples, here are two. In 1545 Ellen Armerode left "to Jane Armerode my bedes, a chiste, a red coverlet, and a pare of newe hempe tere shetes; to Margaret Hetton my warste petticoate and my best hate."⁵ In the Shuttleworth Accounts in 1602 "deliv'd to Elizabeth, to make ij p'rec of shittes . . . of canvas of the tere of hemp contayninge in mesure xxxij yeardes."⁶

Next are two coffers and one "which." In modern times we use the word "coffer" to indicate a long and narrow box made of boards nailed or pegged together, and that was one meaning of the word in the time of Shakespeare; but he more frequently uses it to denote a small box or casket made strong with locks and bands of steel in which money, jewels or other valuables were stored. For instance, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Falstaff says, "I will use her as the key to the cuckoldy rogue's

¹ Printed in *Outlines*, vol. ii, p. 408.

² *Miscellaneous Doc.*, Birthplace. All were at Snitterfield.

⁴ Ib.

⁵ *Testa. Ebor.*, vol. cvi, p. 214.

³ Ib.

⁶ Page 152.

coffer";¹ but in the same play Sir Hugh Evans uses the word in the other sense. "If there be any pody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses."² And later Mistress Ford says, "He will seek there on my word. Neither coffer, chest, trunk, well, vault, but he hath an abstract for the remembrance of such places."³

As a rule, in old documents coffers are distinct from chests, and it seems safe to assume that the coffer was made of slabs of wood and the chest was built of numerous panels framed in with rails and styles morticed together. These were made by the craft of joiners. A "which" was a chest,⁴ but to what kind of chest the word was given the dictionaries do not say. In the inventory dated 1573 of Alexander Webbe, the brother of Robert Arden's second wife, there was "In the Kytchin" a "boltyng which," no doubt indicating the same sort of article and showing that it was a chest for bolting meal with a sieve. Also other inventories like that of Wm. Bedell, a Stratford butcher, for instance, who in 1592 had "a bowltyng wytche" in "the kytchyn," point to the same conclusion. In a fine inventory of 1597, a manuscript at Helmingham Hall, Suffolk, there was "In the Bultinge House, 1 Bultinge hutch, 1 mingling trough & iij Sives." In the first part of *King Henry IV*, Prince Henry says, "Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness?"⁵

In Robert's inventory the next item is "v borde-clothes 11 toweles and one dyeper towelle" valued at 6s. 8d. Table-cloths seem to have been used by nearly everyone, even for the very long refectory tables. Diaper was derived from d'Ypres, celebrated for textile fabrics.

In 1519 Prior More noted "Item payd to ye Sexten for tabull clothes & towells of Dyapur & Damaske, viz. ij long clothes of dyapur to ye long tabul in ye grete hall every on of ix yeards. Item ij tabulclothes of damaske for ye hye tabull in ye lyttul hall with ij towells of Damaske xv yeards long ye hoole £6 os. 2d. Item payd to Jone Clerke for sowyng & hemmyng of my dyapur clothes 8d."⁶

¹ Act II, Sc. 2.

² Act III, Sc. 3.

³ Act IV, Sc. 2.

⁴ J. O. Halliwell, *Dictionary of Archaic Words*.

⁵ Act III, Sc. 4.

⁶ *Journal of Prior More*, p. 87.



FIG. 70.—A Court (i.e. short) cupboard

RUSH MATTRESSES

The mattresses may have been of straw or hair, but as a rule the first thing that was laid upon the cords which were passed through the massive oak side-rails of the bedstead would be a mattress of plaited rushes, of which there are good examples at Anne Hathaway's and at the Arden's house at Wilmcote. The one at Shottery was bought with the house and has probably been there for centuries, but the other has only been at Wilmcote since the Trustees bought the house (Figs. 71 and 72).

It must not be supposed that there was anything rustic or plebeian about such mats. They were the usual foundation on which beds were placed and were often catalogued in the inventories of great houses. On their tombs great people were often depicted as lying upon them, with the one end folded up as a support for the head. A number of effigies in Dugdale's *History of Warwickshire* are so shown in his illustrations. One of the most realistic and most elaborately finished is the figure of Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, in the Beauchamp Chapel, who is wearing a coronet and the robes of the Garter, and who lies on a rush mat rolled up. It was usual in an Elizabethan house to keep a suit of black hangings for the chief standing-bed on which a member of the family who had died lay in state till the funeral, and no doubt the corpse would lie on the rush mattress with the end rolled up to form a pillow (Fig. 72). It seems probable that this was why it was thought suitable that the deceased's effigy should lie on a "mat." In *Stemmata Shirleiana* is a copy of the order for a tomb to John Shirley made in 1585 and which is at Breedon in Leicestershire. He is to have "about his necke a double cheyne of gold, with creste and helmette under his head wth sword & dagger by his syde, a lyon at his feete, and as being upon a matte."¹

THE TRUCKLE BED

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* there is a scene in the Garter Inn, when Simple says to the Host: "I come to speak with

¹ Evelyn Philip Shirley of Ettington, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, p. 76.

Sir John Falstaff from Master Slender," and the Host replies: "There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed and truckle-bed."

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Sc. I, in an open place adjoining Capulet's garden, Mercutio says, "Romeo, good-night; I'll to my truckle-bed, this field-bed is too cold for me to sleep." The field-bed, often called a trussing-bed, was one which could be easily taken to pieces and used on journeys. Mercutio, a persistent punster, is punning in this speech on the word "field," in calling a bare space of grass, which he has found chilly, "a field-bed."

The standing-bed in early Tudor times meant a big four-poster with colour, tester and curtains, the tester (that is, the roof) would also be of drapery, frequently with painted decoration. The fourposts were all carved in the same pattern, and generally had at the top a metal finial or pennon.¹ As Robert Arden was alive in the reign of Henry VII, he probably slept on a bedstead of that sort.

The truckle-bed was a low frame on solid wooden wheels, which could be trundled under the standing-bed. The only one I know to exist is at the Cardiff Museum.

POTS

The pots in the inventories of Robert and Agnes Arden were the three-legged cooking-pots cast in brass or bell-metal, which are now only to be found in museums and old houses. They were made by the craft of Potters, as to which there has been misunderstanding in many works on English ceramics. The potters were not makers of earthenware. They were makers of bells and bell-metal pots. The complaint of the trade of Potters of London shows that they were all makers of metal pots.² In the Freemen of York in 1505 John Eschby was admitted as a "potter and belmaker," and in 1637 Thomas Ryche as "belfounder and potter."³ An ancient bell at Norwich is inscribed with the name of the potter who made it.⁴

¹ Riley *Memorials of London*, p. 118.

² Ib.

³ Surtees Society, *Roll of Freemen*, vol. 96, pp. 178 and 187.

⁴ L'Estrange's *Church Bells of Norfolk*.

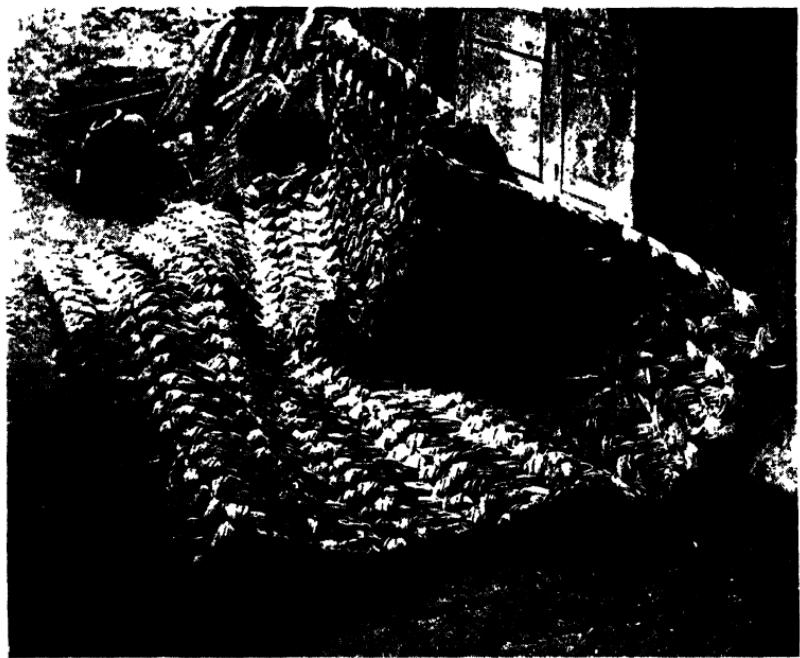


FIG. 71.—Rush mattress



FIG. 72.—Detail of mattress, Earl of Dudley's tomb

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In *Church Bells of England*, by H. B. Walters, the author says: "The ancient bell-founders seem as a rule not to have been very great personages. Now and then one of them is called *campanarius* or *brasiarius*; far more often *ollarius*, which without any wish to give them offence may be Englished 'tinker.' With one or two exceptions, every London bell-founder styled himself *ollarius* until quite late in the fourteenth century."¹ It is, however, wrong to translate that word *ollarius* as "tinker," a craftsman of a totally different kind. The pots that the potter (in medieval Latin, *ollarius*) made were *cast* in bell-metal, sometimes in inventories called brass. In 1585 Odinell Selby left to his son his "best hors, the great brass pott and the best candelsticke to be ayreloomes in his house."² In 1530 John Sayer of Worsall, Armiger, left among "Ayrclomes P'teyning y^e Son & Heir ij brasse pots one of my grandsires making, one other of my fadres making."³ (Fig. 73).

John Trollop of Thornley, Esquier, in 1522 left "a bolting arke and the bras pottes called Thornley Pottes and kerry Pot and all these to be ayre loomes to the place."⁴ There are many instances in old wills such as the above.

As coin was scarce and these bell-metal pots were valuable, they were often bequeathed to monasteries, churches or guilds, in payment of prayers for the testator's soul. In 1534 an inventory taken of the goods of the Guild of the B.V. Mary of Boston shows that there was in "The Over Kechyn, ffirst the greatest pott of Brasse conteynge in weight cli" (100 pounds). This list contained thirteen large pots getting smaller till the last only weighed four pounds, and another list shows "ten more Brass Pottes stondyng over the Buttre," the heaviest weighing thirty-four pounds, and the lightest twenty-one.⁵

Robert Arden had four pans and his wife two brass pans and two calderons. No doubt his pans and caldrons were also of brass, but thin sheet metal, and his two skillets may have been also. Skillets were of two kinds, they were both small cooking-vessels which our modern saucepan has superseded. One kind was made of cast bell-metal by the potter and this had a handle

¹ Page 175.

² Surtees Society, 1860, p. 136.

³ Ib., 1835, p. 109.

⁴ Ib., 1835, p. 106.

⁵ *English Church Furniture*, ed. Peacock, pp. 209 and 210.

cast with it, on the top surface of which was often the name of the maker or owner in relief, and in early examples a pious inscription (see Fig. 74). A late form of this skillet continued to be used in the South until the last century.

The other kind of skillet has a long iron handle, and the pan was made of thin brass, so was probably made by the brazier. The design of this kind rather resembled a small warming-pan, of the early iron-handled kind (Fig. 75).

In the kitchen the pots, pans, cauldrons and candlesticks were the same, but Robert had one basin, one chafing-dish, two skillets, one frying-pan, one gridiron and thirteen carpentry tools, which do not appear in the inventory of Agnes. The pot-hooks, etc., are the same in both, and the cobbards, which were iron racks with a series of hooks in which the spits turned when roasting meat, are also the same in both.

Coopery-ware would include the vat, pails and barrels, the strike is certainly also a wooden vessel, and there must have been a number of wooden tankards, and cups, with other odd ware.

It will be seen, therefore, that the objects, excluding the animals, that are catalogued in the Robert Arden inventory might have been allowed to remain in the possession of his widow until her death twenty-five years after. Considering that twenty-five years had elapsed the similarity is remarkable.



FIG. 73.—Early coffer with cast bell-metal pots; two smaller ones have the legs melted off

Chapter XII

The Birthplace

EXTERIOR

JOHN SHAKESPEARE's house is now a detached building on the north side of Henley Street, the adjoining property having been removed to prevent risk from fire. The east end, which was then a separate house, was purchased by him in 1556, but there are no records to show that he owned the other end of the building till 1575.¹ Nevertheless, that part has been known for considerably more than two centuries as the poet's birthplace. There have been doubters who have said that as John did not buy the western end of the house till 1571, the poet having been born in 1564, it is not the real birthplace, forgetting that a man can, and frequently does, rent the house which in later years he purchases, and that he may live in a house and rear a family there without having acquired the fee simple.²

It seems probable that John Shakespeare had possession of both houses before and after 1564, and that he used a portion of one of them as a glover's shop. The edifice remained in the occupation of his daughter, Joan Hart, after the death of her father in 1601, although it passed into the possession of William Shakespeare, who was then living at New Place. In 1616, when he made his will, she was still living there, and he left her a life interest in the whole building. On her death, thirty years later, the property passed to William's eldest

¹ Stopes, *Shakespeare's Family*, p. 55.

² One may also remember that as the Hart family were direct descendants of Shakespeare's sister, they were much more likely to know which room he was born in than we are.

daughter, Susannah Hall, and at her death to his granddaughter, Mistress Nash, afterwards Lady Bernard, who demised it to Thomas Hart, her first cousin once removed. In the Hart family the house remained for nearly two hundred years, and seems to have existed till the eighteenth century without much alteration.

The foregoing paragraph is based on Sir Sidney Lee,¹ who further says: "Early in Mrs. Joan Hart's occupancy of the Birthplace she restored the houses to their original state of two separate dwellings. While retaining the western portion for her own use, she sub-let the eastern half to a tenant, who converted it into an inn. It was known at first as the 'Maiden-head' and afterwards as the 'Swan and Maidenhead.' The premises remained subdivided thus for some two hundred years, and the inn enjoyed a continuous existence until 1846."

The best-known representation of the original building is a sketch made by Richard Greene of Lichfield, which was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1769.

Halliwell-Phillipps gives two engravings of the front of the house, one which he dates 1762, which shows only the timbers and the tiled roof; and another which is drawn in much greater detail and dated 1769. This, no doubt, is the one made by Richard Greene. Robert Bell Wheler, in his *Stratford History* (printed in 1806), gives among his eight illustrations an excellent impression of the house before the eastern end had a brick front, but not before the one large gable and two small ones had been removed from the roof. In the same book of 1806 he records that Mr. John Shakespeare "resided at a house (at this time divided into two separate dwellings, and possessed by the Hart family, who are the seventh descendants in a direct line, from Jone, the sister of our illustrious townsman) now standing in Henley-street and here his eldest son WILLIAM, the pride of nature and paragon of poets, was born on the 23rd of April 1564; and was baptized on the 26th of the same month."²

In a later work issued in 1814, *A Guide to Stratford-upon-Avon*, he mentions without emotion that "the eastern end in

¹ Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, pp. 9 and 10.

² Bell Wheler, 1806 edition, p. 129.

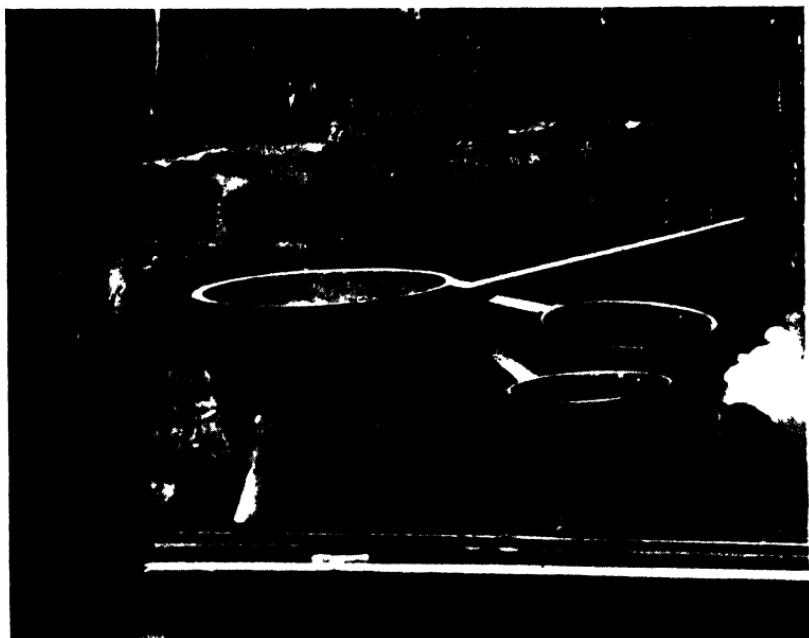


FIG. 74.—Later bell-metal skillets

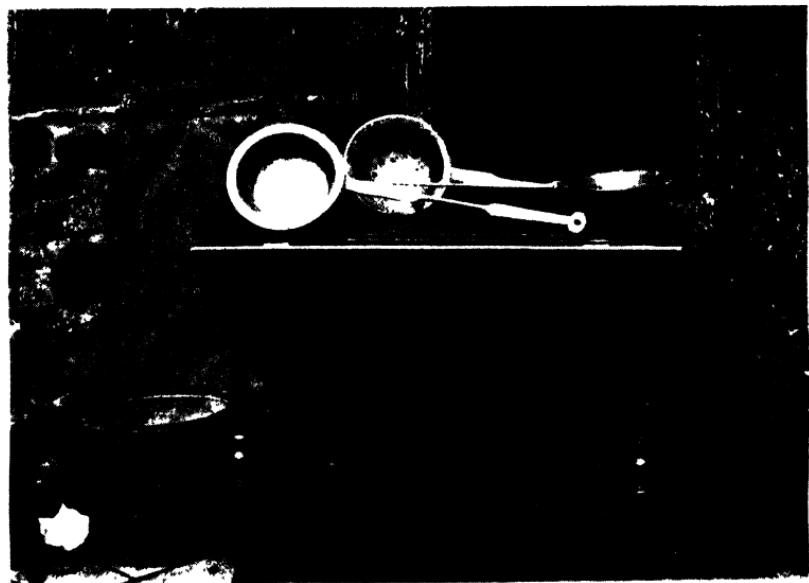


FIG. 75.—Skillets of thin brass with iron handles

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consequence of the ruinous state of the house had been sold to Mr. Thomas Court, that he had occupied the 'Swan and Maidenhead,' which he has newly fronted with brick, whilst the other retains its original appearance; but being equally decayed, will probably soon undergo a similar alteration."¹ Fortunately, however, this further act of vandalism was not perpetrated and the original timber and plaster front remains on that part of the house undisturbed.

In 1806 the Hart family abandoned their old home and sold it to Thomas Court, who lived at the inn; and he turned the westernmost house into a butcher's shop; but in 1846 the whole building was sold in London, and twelve months after bought on behalf of subscribers for £3,000.

The most complete representation of the house seems to be an etching made in 1788 by Colonel Philip de la Motte, of Batsford, Gloucestershire; of which the original copper plate is now in the Birthplace. All the above agree in their delineation of the main beams and general construction of the house, Bell Wheler's version of 1806 was drawn by himself on the spot. By these sketches and the evidence of the house itself it is obvious that it must have been built soon after or not long before the year 1500. The lower storey was of the close-timbered work usual in medieval times, while the upper storey, or first floor, has the rectangular spaces of plaster (called wattle and daub) which were becoming popular early in the sixteenth century. The close-timbered wall for houses was valued in the times when life and property were less secure than they afterwards became in England, and in those days the external walls of houses were all built in that way, because it was more difficult to break through. The beams were placed vertically about nine inches apart only, and in the side of each beam a longitudinal V-shaped channel was cut. When these upright beams had been placed in position and the tenons at the bottom end thrust into their mortice-holes in the ground-sill, small pieces of oak called "splents," which had been sharpened at each end so that they would fit into the V-shaped groove, were pushed down between the beams till the opening was filled up. These pieces of oak greatly increased the strength

¹ Bell Wheler, 1814 edition, p. 12.

of the wall, and also made a "key" for the tempered clay or loam with which the spaces left by the beams inside and outside the house were daubed before the white plaster was skimmed over them. When in 1929 two houses, which proved to be chiefly of ancient timber construction, were pulled down in Church Street to enlarge the offices of the Farmers' Union, the ground was covered with the splents which had fallen out of the dismantled timber-work.

In all the prints of Shakespeare's Birthplace, executed before the inn was bricked, the lower part of the front wall is composed of this early type of narrowly spaced vertical beams, right along the ground-floor of the two tenements; while above, the first-floor rooms have a succession of beams arranged in nearly *square* panels, as we see it to-day.

The above-described vertical timbers stood with their lower ends in the above-mentioned beam called the ground-sill, which lay horizontally on a low strip of stone wall to keep it from damp in the earth or rain that dripped from the spoutless eaves. A few yards of this original stone base still remain, and with it the old ground-sill. The name of this beam came from the habit in earlier times of laying the beam or sill on the earth and morticing the uprights into it. The costs of "grondesillyng, wynding and plasterynge" are frequent in the Stratford Guild Accounts. In volume ii of the Dugdale Society's publications, "groundesellynge in the olde Scole" is explained as "making a clay floor." The next item is "payd for claye," but that was for "daubing" the panels between the timbers of the walls, and not for floors. In *A Guide to Shakespeare's Stratford*,¹ Mr. E. I. Fripp calls the low foundation of stone the "ground Sill," but that also is a mistake. The following extract is from the Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Edmund, Sarum, page 66, in 1491: "For a pece of Tymber for a ynner grounselle of Powles Dance & bordes for other necessaries iijs. ijd."

This kind of wall of close timbers being much more difficult to break through, was in the sixteenth century often used for the more accessible ground-floor walls only and the square panels retained for the upper part of a house and its interior walls. These panels were filled by fixing two upright bars of

¹ Page 54.

oak, called "studs," into holes in the horizontal timbers above and below and then interlacing them with "winding-rods" of hazel, willow or other sticks. When these square panels came more into use for outside walls in later times, oak was not quite so plentiful and brawls and burglaries less frequent. The charges for winding-rods and clay to daub them with, frequently appear in the Records of the Guild which have been printed. In 1496 there are various items for "studdys."

A wall to Shakespeare suggested, not bricks and mortar, but the loam with which the wattled spaces between the beams of a house were daubed, and the plaster or rough-cast with which it was finished on the surface. The walls of gardens and orchards were often built of loam with some straw in it and thatched at the top. When, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Snug the joiner points out to the other players that they cannot bring a wall into the Great Chamber where "Pyramus and Thisbe" is to be played, Bottom decides that the wall must be set forth in dumb-show or symbolized, "Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall."¹

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O! that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!"²

"Restoration," in the year 1847, was unfortunately an even more evil thing than it is now, and after the purchase of the Birthplace in that year, it was inevitable that a certain amount of harm should have been done, but on the whole the ancient contours have been preserved, and when the three gables on the front were re-edified it was stated that the original mortice-holes in the wall-plate had been found and re-used.

There are several early nineteenth-century prints, which show views of the Birthplace before the adjoining houses had been pulled down, but judging by their external aspect there does not seem to have been any interest or age in those which have disappeared.

¹ Act III, Sc. 1.

² *Hamlet*, Act V, Sc. 1.

INTERIOR OF THE BIRTHPLACE

The Hall

Let us now approach the modest portal upon entering which a Royal Princess knelt in awe,¹ and in visiting which one would imagine that the most *blasé* tourist must feel at least some slight thrill.

The hall is an extremely simple apartment, its walls consisting only of the ancient beams and plaster of which the house is chiefly built, and fortunately no colour-wash, stain, creosote or tar has been put on them in modern times. The beams of the ceiling have every appearance of being original, and nowhere in the house is there any evidence that an open-roofed hall with a louvre, such as formerly existed at the Wilmcote house, has ever here been changed to the later fashion by putting in floors and chimneys; the roof beams now are modern. In the days of the Shakespeares the walls would be hidden by hangings which, without doubt, would be of "stained" or "painted" cloths. They served as decoration, and also to keep out draughts (see Chapter VI).

The floor is paved with Wilmcote limestone, and one of Shakespeare's biographers has expressed great surprise at its shattered appearance, but he did not know that this local stone splits quite easily, also the floor is of considerable age. In the far corner on the left is a door that admits to another room, which is not shown to visitors and used to be the depository of the town's ancient records before the modern one was built. Three of its walls are of ancient "half-timber," but the gable is a part of the 1847 restoration. This room has a separate door from the street which was no doubt made in modern times because the old entrance-hall had been turned into a butcher's shop.

Unfortunately most of the windows of the house were modernized in 1847, and only the one in the Birth-room was

¹ "The dwelling has become a place of worship for pilgrims of all nations, and its walls, long used to vulgar sights, have, in our days, seen a Princess, of Stuart and Plantagenet blood, destined to wear an imperial crown, fall on her knees at the threshold."—J. J. Jusserand, *A Literary History of the English People*, vol. iii, p. 154.

left unaltered, no doubt because of the number and interest of the names that are scratched on the panes.

The Kitchen

The kitchen opens out of the hall. It is not built at right-angles to the main block but, for no apparent reason, leans considerably to the west. The long fireplace is built of blocks of the local limestone, with an oak lintel hidden by a later board of oak.

The walls of the kitchen have been restored in places, but most of the ancient work remains, and can easily be discerned. Beyond are places which were probably larder and scullery. Above the fireplace is an upright beam which has holes for a roasting-jack, and there is also a mantelshelf upon which is a mouse-trap of the ancient "dead-fall" pattern, a rush-light holder, and a leather bottle of Elizabethan shape which I got from an Evesham inn-yard, and presented a long time before I had ever dreamed of living in Stratford. I thought the leather bottle seemed appropriate because Shakespeare mentions that interesting vessel in a delightful passage in praise of rural life, in which he depicts King Henry VI thinking,

"it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain;

Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings, that fear their subjects' treachery?
O, yes, it doth; a thousand fold it doth.
And to conclude,—the Shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched on a curious bed,
When care, mistrust and treason wait on him."¹

Other vessels made of leather were familiar to Shakespeare

¹ 3 *King Henry VI*, Act II, Sc. 5.

and are sometimes mentioned in Stratford domestic inventories. He refers to black jacks in *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Grumio says, "Be the Jacks fair within, the Jills fair without, and carpets laid, and everything in order,"¹ which is a jocular way of asking, "Are the leathern jugs clean inside and the maids neatly dressed?"

The gigantic leather pitchers holding seven or eight gallons each he brings in with graphic realism in *The Tempest*; for even those who have never seen a huge black bombard held horizontally to pour out ale can appreciate the speech of Trinculo in *The Tempest*, "another storm brewing, I hear it sing i' the wind: yond same black cloud yond huge one, looks like a foul bombard that would shed his liquor."²

Again, in the first part of *King Henry IV*, when Prince Henry in deriding Falstaff describes him as "that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swoln parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack."³ The last two epithets are very appropriate as flung at the bloated Falstaff, but the worst thing about a "bolting-hutch" (a chest which was used for sifting flour and meal) was the bran, and such a word does not seem quite so fittingly applied as the others, but probably Shakespeare was tempted by the alliteration, the rhythm and the manner in which the words fit so perfectly into the sentence.

In the play of *King Henry VIII*, where the Lord Chamberlain rebukes the Palace porters, he says, "Ye're lazy knaves; and here ye lie, baiting of bombards when ye should do service."

Water-bougets Shakespeare does not mention, but he must have been familiar with their bulging shapes, when "by draught of horse from rivers and wells, bougets were brought by brewers for good ale."⁴

As they were numerous in Coventry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and as in Worcester they are mentioned in 1467 and 1497, as well as late as 1703; and seeing that they are described by Dr. Plot in his *History of Staffordshire* as being in use at Wolverhampton in 1686, therefore Shakespeare, who lived, roughly speaking, midway between these towns could not fail to encounter them on the local roads. In Stratford

¹ Act IV, Sc. 1.

² Act II, Sc. 2.

³ Act II, Sc. 4.

⁴ John Lydgate. Printed in *British Bibliographer*, vol. ii, p. 151.

itself I have only found one record of them, but water carried in bougets from the river would be a great convenience to all the householders.

As the account in my book on *Leather Jacks and Bottles* does not mention the spot on Severn side where the Bitters or Water Leaders of Worcester were allowed to fill their "byts" or water bougets, I will record here that it was at the quay called "Bitter's Slip." During the reign of the Cromwellians it was found that there was a want "of instruments applying to the execution of justice upon offenders, viz., the pillorie, whipping post and gum-stoole." This last implement was generally called a Cucking or Ducking-stool. There is a good example at Warwick in the crypt of St. Mary's Church. At Kenilworth is another which used to be kept over the gateway of the ruined Priory. In the Priory Church at Leominster is a very fine and perfect example. In Worcester it is recorded in 1656 that the Gum-stool had been set up at Bitter's Slip, where it would be handy for dipping scolding women in the Severn, and was apparently a permanent erection.

RUSHES

In old times it is certain that the floors of the downstairs rooms would be sprinkled with rushes, as was the English practice. Churches and houses were almost invariably strewn with rushes, or on special occasions with flowers and herbs also. At Durham Abbey great quantities of rushes are charged for in the Account Rolls. In 1557, "Payde for caryage of 11 sekkes Reyshez from ye Holme wth 4 horsez 2s, & cuttinge 12d 3s."¹ At earlier dates they were gathered for the Prior's Chamber, for the Church, for the cloister, hall, and chambers, for the Infirmary Chapel and various other buildings. In 1576, "For rushes & flowers at ye Judge's here 4s."²

In London the accounts of the Livery Companies show very numerous items for the purchase of rushes (and less often of herbs and flowers) for strewing. In 1528 the Coopers Guild

¹ Surtees Society, *Account Rolls, Durham Abbey*, p. 715.

² *Account Rolls, Durham Abbey*, p. 717.

in the City of London "Paid for four bundles of rushes the day the Mayor went to Westminster." These were probably for strewing the streets. In the second part of *King Henry IV*, Act V, Sc. 5, which is a public place near Westminster Abbey, two Grooms enter strewing rushes, and the first Groom shouts, "More rushes, more rushes." In 1546 occurs in the above Accounts of the Guild of Coopers: "Paid for rushes and flowers against Allhallow's tide o. 4." "Paid for rushes and flowers and rosemary against Christmas o. 4." In 1547, "Further payments" in respect of the great dinner "For cucumbers, radish roots, rosemary and parsley o. 4. For rushes & sweet herbs that strewed the house, o. 4d."¹

Paul Hentzner, a German who travelled in England in 1598, described the Queen's Presence Chamber at Greenwich as "hung with rich tapestry, and the floor, after the English fashion, strewed with hay."² It has always been presumed that he saw rushes, not hay, but in 1617 "bents" (long dry grass stems) as well as rushes were used to strew the rooms of Naworth Castle when Lord William Howard lived there. In June, "Bents and rushes for the chambers vjd"; a few days later, "2 burdens of bents iiijd"; and again in July, "For bents to strow in the chambers iiid" occur.³ Also, in 1547, the Abbot and Convent of Kenilworth had let the profits of Bidford Rectory to Eustace Knightley, gentleman, "and he shall find straw, as well for les seates of the church of Bidford as for the Vicar there, as has been usual from ancient times."⁴ Also, at Scarcliff in Derbyshire the Abbey of Darley provided 12d. a year for straw for the church of Skarcliff.⁵ In 1504 the churchwardens of St. Mary-at-Hill, London, paid for "Two Berdon Rysshess for the strewing the new pews."

In the Stratford Guild Accounts there are many items of payments for rushes, generally spelt "rysshyn." In 1408, in preparation for a feast, 5d. was spent for "ryschen" for the hall. In 1428 13d. for rushes (*in sirpos*). In 1438 one penny

¹ *History of Coopers Company of London.*

² Ray, *England as Seen by Foreigners*, p. 104.

³ Surtees Society, vol. 68, p. 94.

⁴ Dugdale Society, *Latin Accounts of Monastic Estates in Warwickshire*, vol. ii., p. 37.

⁵ J. C. Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 245.

was paid for a bundle of rushes bought for the counting-house by precept of the master.¹

Almost any number of instances might be given of the use of rushes for strewing floors. Shakespeare was very familiar with their use. In the first part of *King Henry IV*, Glendower says, "She bids you on the wanton rushes lay you down."² In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Grumio exclaims, "Where's the cook? is supper ready, the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept; . . . and carpets laid, and everythin'g in order?"³ Of course, this does not mean the carpets that were laid on floors, as we lay them now. The carpets of those days were made of tapestry or needlework and were used to decorate the tables and cupboards. In 1521 the Lestranges "pd. for a carpette for the tabil in ye plor xxxviijs."⁴

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo, instead of dancing, prefers to be a candle-holder at Capulet's hall and says, "A torch for me: let wantons, light of heart, tickle the senseless rushes with their heels."⁵ In *Cymbeline*, Iachimo, coming from the trunk, says, "Our Tarquin thus Did softly press the rushes."⁶

None of the extracts that I have found seem to indicate a state of filthiness and neglect which is taken for granted by some writers, and we can be certain that John Shakespeare's house was cleaner and more sanitary than was usual in the Stratford of his days. Plague flourished on filth, and in 1564 an unusually deadly and widespread visitation of plague ravaged the town. The fact that he was able to do the work for colleagues whose houses were "visited" and that his family, including the poet, escaped infection, suggests that the house was maintained in an exceptional condition of cleanliness.

On the other hand, there is a letter in existence written by Erasmus to Dr. Francis, physician to Cardinal Wolsey, in which he considers the use of rushes on the floors, and the neglect to remove the lower layers, to be one of the causes of the virulence of the plague in England. I had great difficulty in finding this letter, but eventually stumbled across some notes which I had made many years ago which enabled

¹ *Stratford Guild Accounts*, printed version, pp. 8, 17, 25.

² *I Henry IV*, Act III, Sc. 1.

⁴ *Archaeologia*, vol. xxv.

³ Act IV, Sc. 1.

⁵ Act I, Sc. 4.

⁶ Act II, Sc. 2.

my old schoolfellow, Rupert Deakin, to send me a copy of it.

In discussing the causes of plague and the Sweating Sickness in England, Erasmus says, "First they have no consideration as to the quarter of heaven to which windows or doors look: secondly, dining-halls have generally been built in such a way that they are by no means firm, a matter about which Galen warns us. Then again they have a large part of the wall transparent with quarries of glass, and they admit light in such a way that they shut out winds, and nevertheless admit through chinks the purified air which becomes somewhat more pestilent through remaining inside for a long time. Then again the floors have generally been paved with clay, and sometimes with rushes from a marsh, which from time to time are so renewed that the foundation remains the same for twenty years, keeping warm beneath them, spittle, vomit, dung of dogs and men, beer that has been thrown out, and the remains of fish with other filth not to be named. In consequence of this when the temperature has changed, a kind of vapour is exhaled, in my opinion by no means healthful to the human body."¹

It hardly seems, however, that the criticisms of Erasmus are to be taken too literally, and it is difficult to see how he could know the contents of the bottom layers of rushes if they were so rarely exposed. At London, in the Middle Ages, the quantity of used rushes thrown into the Thames impeded the traffic on the river. Erasmus in his visits to this country lived with important people whose great halls would have numerous servants, lacqueys, and retainers, who would be likely to fling the beer dregs on the floor, and to throw bones to the dogs, or fish to the cats, without any regard to sanitary conditions, but in a house the size of the Shakespeare Birthplace, it would hardly be possible to go on strewing layer after layer of rushes without removing the old layer first, because they would be a nuisance at the fireplaces and doorways, and impede the movements of the occupants.

¹ For the original Latin, see Appendix.

THE BIRTHPLACE CELLAR

Writing about the Birthplace Halliwell-Phillipps says, "It may be confidently asserted that there is only one room in the entire building which has not greatly changed since the days of the poet's boyhood. This is the antique cellar under the sitting-room, from which it is approached by a diminutive flight of steps."¹

No doubt the *appearance* of the rooms has been changed since the days of the poet's boyhood because the furniture and draperies of John Shakespeare and his family are no longer in them, and some rooms were mauled at the restoration of 1847, but to suggest that the cellar is older and has more ancient character than the rooms above it is erroneous. In the time of the Shakespeares cellars were very rare in houses of that sort, and where they existed in towns like Stratford have been found under vintners' shops, inns or taverns in the main business streets. They were generally shallow with wide entrances. In some ancient towns, cellars had stairs which encroached on the street, and were occupied by tinkers, cobblers or other small tradesmen, but there is nothing about this one—a featureless hole in the ground at the back of the house, lined with Wilmcote stone—which would suggest that it must necessarily have been constructed more than a hundred years ago. It may have been made when that part of the house was converted into a butcher's shop by Thomas Court who bought the whole building from the Harts in 1806.²

SPIT-TURNING

Passing from the hall, the next room is the large one (now called the Museum) which, as part of the "Maidenhead" (afterwards the "Swan and Maidenhead"), was for a long time sub-let by the Hart family, and was an inn for about two hundred

¹ *Outlines*, p. 33.

² It is unfortunate that this statement by Halliwell-Phillipps has been repeated by other biographers. Sir Sidney Lee says, "Much of the Elizabethan timber and stonework survives in the double structure, but a cellar under the Birthplace is the only portion which remains as it was at the date of the poet's birth."—P. 11.

years. Its best feature is the large and well-preserved fireplace which much resembles the one in the hall but is larger and more massive, also the hall fireplace has a small and very shallow space cut in the beam for fixing a roasting-jack, while this one in the inn has three places for jacks, and all three much larger than those in the hall and kitchen. There are two large holes in the horizontal beam which go right through it, and there is a vertical beam standing on it with two more spaces cut out, and in each two large holes and two smaller ones, evidently for extra large and heavy machines, such a machine, for instance, as the one at Ingatestone mentioned later.

Roasting-jacks were coming into use towards the end of the sixteenth century. Donald Lupton, who was writing in the early part of the seventeenth century, seems to have regarded them as indicating a certain stinginess in the household. Of "Hospitality" he says, "Any one may know where hee kept house, either by the Chimnies smoak, by the freedom at gate,¹ by want of whirligige Jackes in the Kitchin, by the fire in the Hall, or by the full furnish'd tables."² Jacks for roasting caused some jealousy such as the introduction of machinery always caused, because of the reduced demand for labour. When there was no "whirligig jack" "the boy of the kitchen," who is constantly mentioned in old housekeeping accounts, was greatly in demand for spit-turning by hand. It seems probable that on special occasions one spit, stuck full with joints, birds or even with a whole porker—Dromio of Ephesus says, "The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit"³—was not enough to feed the extra customers.

A roasting-jack was worked by a suspended weight, generally of stone, which was drawn up by winding the long rope on to a drum, as the bucket of a well or the weight of a church clock is wound up by a crank handle; and the running down of the stone weight turned a small wheel within the chimney which by a thin chain passed on the power to a similar wooden wheel fastened to the end of the spit. This kind of wheel was simply a circular lump of wood

¹ The poor not kept out by the porter at the gate-house.

² *Aungervyle Society Reprints*, p. 32.

³ *The Comedy of Errors*, Act I, Sc. 2.



FIG. 76.—Whirligig jack for roasting

with a groove in its circumference. Obviously the more rope that could be unwound from the drum, the less often would the jack have to be wound up; therefore in some old houses there is a hole provided in the floor directly beneath the jack through which the weight could drop into the cellar. At Yokes Court in Kent there is an instance of this arrangement, and at a shop in the High Street at Stratford the hole is at the back of the fireplace in one corner.

Precisely what sort of design the mechanical roasting-jack of Elizabethan times had reached is difficult to say, but as it was called a "whirligig jack" it was no doubt provided with knobs of lead on the ends of the spokes which revolving slowly at the top of the jack so regulated the speed of the spits (see a later example at Fig. 76). This arrangement is sometimes an iron wheel, which fulfils the same purpose.

The evidences over the fireplace in that part of the Birthplace which became the Swan Inn indicate an extra large jack and that it could work three spits at once. It seems to have resembled one which was in the kitchen of Ingatestone Hall, the home of Sir John Petre, and described in 1600 as "A great Jack with a lyne, three Cheynes & three leade weights cont: Cii qrter,"¹ that is, with a long rope to wind on to the drum, three chains and three lead weights, containing one hundred and two quarters. There were also "Three yron racks Three great yron Spitts with handles Five Yron Spitts with yron wheeles Three yron Drupinge panns."²

Except that there would not be iron wheels on the spits in such a moderate-sized house, or so many of them, it is probable that the roasting-jack and its belongings at the larger room in the Birthplace was of the kind above described. I have always regarded spits with iron wheels on one end as being rather modern, and was surprised to find them in Sir John Petre's great kitchen at the latter end of the sixteenth century,³ but iron was becoming less scarce then, and the man who made the jack would be quite able to make the wheels.

Richard Shuttleworth in 1608 paid for setting one up at

¹ MS. Inventory at Ingatestone.

² Ib.

³ They were not likely to have been newly placed there in 1600, when the inventory was made.

the house he had inherited in London, "payed for the jacke,
the cordes and pullies xxv^s. the weight and cheans [chains] v^s.
the jacke maker's man vj^d."¹

HAND-TURNED SPITS

The spit with a crank-handle continued in use down to living memory. In 1893 in the Herefordshire village of Pembridge, which in the Middle Ages was a town, I was carrying a seven-foot spit, which I had bought of a second-hand iron dealer, when an old man standing at his cottage door remarked that he had often turned that sort of spit when he was a boy. I have still got the spit, but it is not as bright as when I acquired it: also the aged landlord at an inn at Newton, an old village in Shropshire, where spit racks hung over the fireplace, told me that he "did a deal of spit-turning" in his youth at that very same thatched old house.

At Stratford the Guild Accounts show many items for turning by hand. In 1428 "4d. to 4 turnebroches." In 1469 "paid to turnespyttes, 2s. 4d." Three half-pence was paid by the Guild "pro turnespyttes" after a feast in 1478, and in 1470 "4d. to the Turners de la Spyttes." The accounts cease some time before the Guild was dissolved, but doubtless the spits continued to be turned.

THE TURN-SPIT DOG

Another method of turning spits without the hand-work of a "turn-broche," was by a wheel of wood three or four feet across, which was fastened to the wall of the kitchen, and in which a dog worked as in the treadmill of nineteenth-century prisons; or more accurately like nineteenth-century squirrels and white mice worked in wire cages. The method of this device is very clearly shown in a print by Thomas Rowlandson of a kitchen scene at Newcastle Emlyn in Cardiganshire.² The dog wheel is near the ceiling with a rather

¹ *Shuttleworth Accounts*, p. 175.

² This print is illustrated in Miss Gertrude Jekyll's book, *Old English Household Life*, p. 43.

small dog working it. The chain passes to the edge of the mantelshelf and from thence to the wooden wheel on the end of the spit upon which a joint is roasting. There is a dripping-pan under it from which a young woman is basting the meat. Above the fireplace one of a pair of spit-racks is visible with a spit in it. The print is about one hundred and fifty years old, but the system is at least as old as the time of Shakespeare. Dromio of Syracuse says, "I think if my breast had not been made of faith and my heart of steel, she [meaning the cook] had transformed me to a curtail-dog, and made me turn ith wheel."¹ Also in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Pistol says, "Hope is a curtail-dog in some affairs: Sir John affects thy wife."²

There is an old dog-wheel for turning the spits, fixed high up on the wall at the side of the fireplace in the kitchen of the old manor-house at Bredon, on the banks of the Avon, above Tewkesbury, but it has not been used for many years. (See Fig. 77.) There is another very similar wooden wheel in a recess in the kitchen wall of an ancient stone house in the lovely old village of Laycock in Wiltshire. This one is sunk in a recess not more than four feet from the ground, and unless the room has been considerably altered, it is puzzling to discern how the power was used. Both these wheels have flat spokes, shaped ornamentally.

Such wheels do not occur much in inventories, but in a manuscript list of the goods which were in the ancient moated mansion of the Tollemache family at Helmingham in Suffolk in the year 1597, there was in the Kitchen "i Turne speet wheele."

Dr. Caius, founder of Caius College at Cambridge, writing about 1650, said there was a certain kind of coarse cur in kitchen service which, when meat was to be roasted, would go into a wheel and turning it about with the weight of their bodies were popularly called "turnspits." When I was young the kind of dog which is now called a daschund was always called a "turnspit" dog, and we were informed

¹ *Comedy of Errors*, Act III, Sc. 2. In the first folio the word is spelt "Curtull."

² *Merry Wives*, Act II, Sc. 1.

that it owed its singular shape to the constant spit-turning of its ancestors.

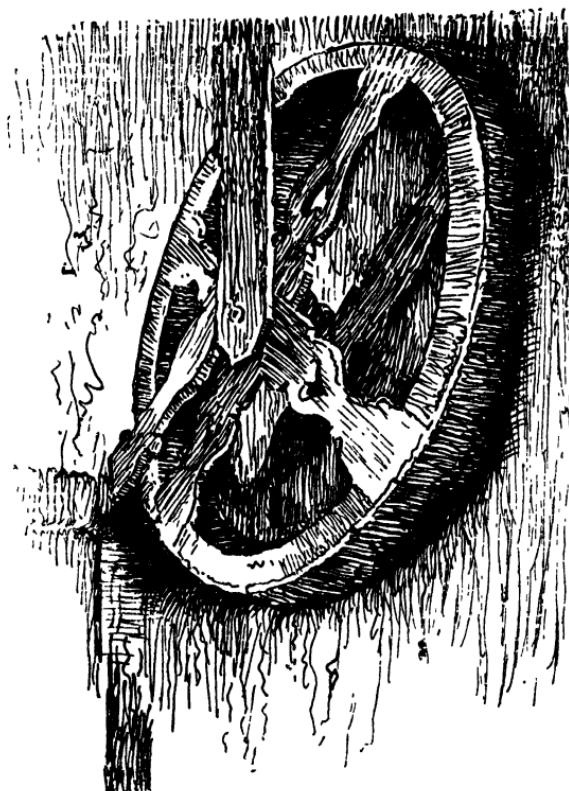


FIG. 77.—Dog-wheel at Bredon Manor-house

SHAKESPEARE AND SPITS

Shakespeare certainly knew roasting-jacks, though not at his birthplace, as during his youth they were only used in big and "up-to-date" houses. No doubt he was often called upon to turn the spit by the handle while he was at home. Benedick says of Beatrice "she would have made Hercules have turned spit; yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too."¹ In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Moth says to Armado, "with

¹ *Much Ado*, Act II, Sc. 1.

your hat pent-house like o'er the shop of your eyes; with your arms crossed on your thin belly-doublet like a rabbit on a spit; or your hands in your pocket, like a man after the old painting.”¹ Coriolanus approaching Antium disguised and muffled, says, “City, ‘Tis I that made thy widows . . . then know me not, Lest that thy wives with spits and boys with stones In puny battle slay me.”²

A BROCHE WAS A SPIT

Of course Shakespeare also knew the other name for a spit which occurs in the inventory that accompanies his grandfather’s will, namely—“broche.” He uses the verb “to broach” several times, being accustomed to seeing birds, joints or animals spitted in front of a fire. “Bringing rebellion broached on his sword.”³ “I’ll broach the tadpole on my rapier’s point.”⁴ These make use of the spitting of birds and animals as a figure of speech, but in other plays he used the verb “to broach” in the totally different sense of tapping or opening butts of wine.

In the kitchen of Catharine of Aragon at Baynard’s Castle, after her death in 1536, were “a rounde broche, with a paire of rackis to the same, one fyre panne, one fyre fork!”⁵ The same word is used in the inventory, dated 1527, of Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, illegitimate son of Henry VIII. Under “Kechen Stiffe” are “Item yron Rakkes, ij. Standert Broches iij. The rounde Broches iij, Item square Broches iij, Item xij. Item a Grydyron j.”⁶

In Stratford we are accustomed, at the ancient Statute Fair known commonly as “The Mop,” to seeing the carcases of bullocks and pigs slowly revolving in front of large fires built in the streets, the animal being broached on a short pole, which has a cart-wheel fixed to one end, and is turncd by one of the men in charge, while another cuts slices of meat for the waiting crowd. Before the Great War this ancient fair, often called the Stratford Bull-roast, was the only one in the

¹ *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act III, Sc. 1.

² *Coriolanus*, Act IV, Sc. 5.

³ *Henry V*, Chorus V.

⁴ *Titus Andronicus*, Act IV, Sc. 2.

⁵ *Camden Miscellany*, vol. iii, p. 41.

⁶ *Camden Miscellany*, vol. iii, p. 20.

country which had continued to increase in size and popularity. On October 24, 1930, the local newspaper had this paragraph: "A correspondent says he is under the impression that 1902 was the record year for roastings, but our files show eight oxen and eight or ten pigs were spitted, whereas in 1909 there were eight fat oxen and about a dozen prime porkers."¹

About the year 1750, the invention of the smoke-jack, which was worked by an iron fan half-way up the chimney, must have rivalled the other earlier methods of roasting, but as it had nothing to do with the life of the poet we need not notice it here. It was only suitable for places where big fires were maintained, and was used in the two kitchens of Stratford's Town Hall till at the Jubilee of 1887 they were found to have become rusty and difficult to work, so were not used. One of these smoke-jacks is now fixed on the wall of the Town Hall kitchen and the other is in a fireplace at the New Place Museum.

In the year 1893, while sketching at an ancient watermill on the Avon, I found in a disused kitchen the original clock-work roasting-jack still in its place over the fire-hearth. On talking to the miller about it he said that the rest of the apparatus was somewhere about the place, and showed me how the rope from the drum had used to pass over wooden wheels which still remained on the beams of the roof and reached the far corner of the kitchen where the weight was suspended. I searched a pile of old iron by the weir and found a stone weight, also one small spit and a pair of "cobards" which supported it, and arranged them in the fireplace. I hope they are there still.

BIRTHPLACE FIREPLACES

The fireplace in the hall has on the beam five deeply burnt-in upright grooves, and on the oak lintel of the fireplace in the next room are more of these deep vertical grooves burnt. There seems to be no obvious explanation of their presence, but I think they must have been caused accidentally, by candles or rushlights left unattended. They begin under the

¹ *Stratford-on-Avon Herald.*

lintel and across the broad chamfers and continue up the face of the beam. A hanging rushlight-holder, which had a socket for a candle also, was generally suspended from an iron rod which ran horizontally above the opening of a fireplace and was mostly used when cooking was in progress. There is an old example of this hanging rush-holder at the Arden house at Wilmcote, which has been hung there since the purchase of the building by the Trustees. The sides of the Birthplace fireplaces are built of oldish thin bricks, but it is possible that they have been re-edified and were originally of Wilmcote limestone, like that in the kitchen. If the jambs of these fireplaces had been built of Warwick or Cotswold stone, the bold chamfer on the wooden lintels would have been returned part of the way down the jambs. But this local limestone responds to the blows of a chisel, by breaking off anywhere except where it is wanted to break. So in both rooms the chamfer on the oak beam ceases before it reaches the sides of the fireplace, and is finished with a carefully cut "stop" at each end of the arch and a very blunt point in the centre, showing them to be work of about the beginning of the sixteenth century, a date which corresponds with that of the house itself, excepting of course the nineteenth-century restorations, which having been made with modern oak are, where they exist, quite obvious.

THE UPPER ROOMS

A modern staircase admits to the upper rooms, and lands one opposite to an old fireplace. The chimney is of stone and is visible up to the roof, but the jambs of the hearth are of brick and were probably rebuilt in past times. The lintel is a plain oak beam with chamfered edge. Near this fireplace is a large desk obviously very ancient, and made of elm in thick slabs. It was brought from the Grammar School, and is called Shakespeare's, but is much more likely to have been the pedagogue's desk.

Two of the rooms are now practically one, by the removal of the plaster panels in the dividing wall. They are chiefly occupied with show-cases full of priceless books and manu-

scripts. In the farther room is another fireplace, now covered up, many sketches and prints of the Birthplace, and two oval portraits said to represent Shakespeare's granddaughter and Sir John Bernard, her second husband.

Here an object of great interest is a large oak "cubborde of Boxes." It has two doors of eight panels each, covering its whole front. It was made in 1594 and is historically valuable, because not only the date but all the details of its making are recorded in the Corporation documents. In "The Accomptes of Richard Ange & Abraham Sturley Chamberleyns, 20 Dec. 1594. The newe Cubborde of Boxes. Item iij hundred boardes xvjs vjd, and a x foote. for nayles & glue iiijs. Laurence Abell's worke xvi. days & a halfe xvjs. Iron, hinges, lockes, keyes & screw pinnes vjs vjd ob. 145 pound. Paid to Oliver Hickox for three pair of great hinges. iij lockes & keyes, five score great nayles, xij ringes & staples, iii payre of skrewes xvjs vijd. £3 os. 8½d."

This great cupboard which must have been a familiar object to John Shakespeare and his son, is also very interesting as being an early instance of a piece of furniture closed in with doors being described as a "cubborde" instead of being called an almery or aumbrey as hitherto. It is, moreover, a link in the evolution of what is now called a chest of drawers, for the twelve "boxes" which it contains were really drawers moving in and out on "runners."

In 1440 the Chapel of the Holy Trinity in Somerby Church, Lincolnshire, possessed "a stondyne aumery wt dyvers boxes to shote in & owte wt evidences,"¹ which no doubt was a similar piece of furniture made for the same purpose as this one which was paid for by the Stratford Borough Chamberlains in 1594, and was used for storing the Corporation documents at the Guildhall. Having three locks of different patterns it would require the agreement of three officials, each of whom would possess a different key, to open it. In 1539 William Wordsworth of Penistone left "unto Henrie my sone the coppord in the parlure that myne evidence are in."² Also Cecily Boynton of Rokeby left to her son "the

¹ E. Peacock, *Church Furniture*, p. 208.

² Surtees Society, *Testa. Ebor.*, vol. 106, p. 93.

greate carved pressour in the parloure to be hairelome" and to her daughter "my copbord with ij shote lockers."¹ In 1567 Elizabeth Hunwick of Hutton left "An almery wth iiiij doores & ij shoottis xiijs. iiijd." In the 1620 inventory of Lady Dorothie Shirley at Farrington, Berks, was "in my Ladies chamber, one court cubbert wth a drawing boxe." This was the low or short cupboard, so called to distinguish it from the high one which generally had a canopy. The Court cupboard consisted of three tiers, the two upper ones supported on two turned pillars in front and two plain uprights behind: generally under the centre tier was a drawer called a drawing-box (see Fig. 70).²

It was from such "boxes to shoot in and out" that the chest of drawers was originally devised. At first it was a small cupboard, which had doors covering the drawers, so that they could all be secured with one lock. The doors were continued through what is called the Jacobean period of oak furniture which was coming to an end about the year 1700. As iron was getting cheaper and more plentiful, each drawer could then have a lock of its own and the doors were no longer necessary.

BIRTH-ROOM

At the other end of this section a doorway opens into the Birth-room, the walls and ceiling of which have been scribbled over with thousands of names, visitors at one time being allowed, in the absence of any Visitors' Book, to write on the walls. Many of the names are interesting, and the panes of the window have many more, among them the autographs of Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving.

It is possible, then, to obtain from what remains, a fair idea of the house in which John Shakespeare lived the greater portion of his manhood and in which his son spent the earlier part of his youth. It is of course a deplorable misfortune that the part which was an inn should have been brick-fronted in 1814,³ but we must be thankful that the western half, though

¹ Surtees Society, *Testa. Ebor.*, vol. 106, pp. 301 and 302.

² E. Peacock, *Church Furniture*, p. 208.

³ Bell Wheeler, *Guide to Stratford-on-Avon*, 1814.

threatened, escaped, and that so much of the whole building is still in existence. There is no doubt that the restorers of 1847 rejected ancient timber in some of the unimportant walls, which in these days would have been preserved and not made into souvenirs. But in restoring the dormers and gables they certainly gave to the Stratford pilgrims a better idea of the house in which the Shakespeares lived.

Chapter XIII

Plays and Players

It is well known that for many years before and after Shakespeare's birth, plays were often performed in the provinces, especially at Coventry, Chester, and York. But it is also certain that bands of players were passing through Stratford, and performing there long before the date of the first visits that are recorded in the Chamberlain's Accounts. In the domestic papers of old mansions, in churchwardens' and municipal accounts, in diaries, wills and all sorts of documents, there are constant references to the entertainment of players, and to rewards and payments for their performances. They were passing along the roads, calling at great houses, colleges, guildhalls, and in the Middle Ages staying at monasteries, so constantly that there can be no question as to their numbers, the estimation in which they were held, and the remoteness of the places into which they penetrated. Above all, they frequented the great inns which were so numerous and so flourishing in the sixteenth century, where the quadrangular courtyard, surrounded by tiers of galleries, formed an ideal auditorium for their performances. I have long thought that these inns with storey above storey of galleries round the courtyard must have been intentionally designed for the audiences who came to witness the performances which took place below. There seems otherwise no object for them, as passages with windows would have done just as well or better.

In early times their performances were in the nature of what were called Miracle plays, Moralities and Interludes, which gradually led to less crude and more realistic comedies, which in the sixteenth century were followed by Classical

subjects, also the euphuistic creations of Lyly, the melodramas of Kyd, Marlow, Greene and Peel. It was approaching this latter period when Shakespeare is known to have reached London; but how long he had been there is not known, all the dates suggested being more or less guesswork.

Stratford, a town situated not far from three great Roman roads, the Watling Street, the Fosse Way and the Ryknield Street, has always had good roads leading to it, and was what William Harrison called a "thoroughfare" town.

Players found their way to much more secluded places than Stratford. For instance, in 1464 the monks of Finchale Priory on the River Wear paid for re-roofing a building called the "Player-chamber,"¹ which was probably for housing the passing players who had performed in their hall. The Rev. Canon Raine who edited the accounts in which this is mentioned considered it to have been "a chamber in the Priory appropriated to dramatic representations," but it seems more natural that these should have been presented in the hall, and that the chamber was a comparatively small building used for players to sleep in. The remoteness of the situation was probably one of the reasons that the monks provided a room where the players could sleep. It is also mentioned in an earlier document, and seems to have been a comfortable apartment, and (what was rare in those days) had a fireplace. An inventory of 1411 mentions two sets of pokers and tongs for the fire, one set for the Lord's chamber and one for the chamber of the players.² In the Middle Ages iron was scarce, so that these implements had a greater importance than in these times.

In the Account Rolls of Durham Abbey are a great many entries of payments to players, minstrels, jesters, harpers, etc., and frequently the names of the King, Queen or noblemen, whose men they were, are given. Players (*Histriones*) especially occur in the records, the earliest being in the year 1300³ when "hystrioni Regis" were rewarded with 12d., and the

¹ Priory of Finchale ccxcv pro nova tectura unius camerae vocatae le Playerchambre.

² "In Camera Prioris, ij porrs et forcipes pro igne, videlicet j pro camera Domini et j pro camera ludencium," p. clv

³ Surtees Society, vol. 100, p. 503.

latest in 1579, when “geven to the earle of Lecesters players, 26s 8d” is noted in the Treasurer’s Book.¹

It is not necessary to presume that the plays acted in monasteries were of a religious character. Mummers and minstrels, bear-leaders, jugglers and jesters, besides players and entertainers of all sorts, were welcomed at monasteries. Like other important people the Prior of Durham kept a professional jester (described as “Thomas Fatuus” or “Thomas Fole”), and the Bishop also had one generally entered in the Roll as “stulto d’ni ep’i.” The Bishop also had players, who were probably musicians.² In the Bursar’s Books of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire are many payments to players, minstrels, jesters, etc., among them in the fifteenth century the Earl of Salisbury’s Fool and a fool called Solomon (it took a wise man to be a fool in those days) together with story-tellers and performers of all sorts.³

Coming nearer to Stratford and nearer to the time of Shakespeare, the *Journal* of Prior More, head of the great Cathedral Monastery of Worcester, contains a great many items relating to the visits of players. Between 1518 and 1535, no less than fourteen different companies of players are mentioned, among them being the King’s Players, three times “Item, to the kyngs players, John Slye and his company 6s 8d” is one entry, and there is another mentioning William Sly. The players of the Queen visited the monastery twice, and amongst other bands were those of Lord Ferrers, of the Princess Mary, of Evesham, of Worcester, of Coventry, of Gloucester, besides other numerous groups rewarded for playing.

Only eight miles on the opposite side of Stratford a celebrated company of actors were attached to the household of the Earl of Warwick, and the city of Coventry had become famous for its plays and pageants. Sir William Dugdale, writing about the middle of the seventeenth century of the plays at Coventry, says, “I myselfe have spoke with some

¹ Surtees Society, *Durham Act. Rolls*, vol. 103, p. 717.

² I have already mentioned the Prior of Worcester’s Fool, Roger Knight.—Surtees Society, vol. 100, p. 560.

³ Surtees Society, *Memorials of Fountains Abbey*, vol. 130.

old people who had in their younger yeares bin eye-witnesses of these pageants, soe acted, from whom I have bin tolde that the yearly confluences of people from farr and neare to see that shew was extraordinary great, and which yielded noe small advantage to the city.”¹

Plays and players, then, were numerous throughout the country when Shakespeare was born, and must have been well known in his part of Warwickshire. Doubtless they were often of a crude and primitive type bearing little resemblance to the plays which have made the Elizabethan era famous throughout the world. To a boy, however, the crude and primitive in art is not repellent, and after all, even the plays of Shakespeare bear traces of the influence of these primitive performances; when he was four years old and his father was Bailiff of the town, that is to say in the year 1568, the Queen’s Company of Actors and the Earl of Worcester’s Company gave performances in the Guildhall before the council of the borough.

It is sometimes asserted that plays and players in past times were banned by the Church, but in the Middle Ages this was certainly not so. The Rev. J. C. Cox in his work on *Churchwardens’ Accounts*, writing of Church Plays, says: “This is a vast subject. If all that could be found relative to plays in wardens’ accounts were duly set forth and briefly annotated, it would occupy far more space than the whole of this book.”² He goes on to show from very numerous instances that the plays were often acted in the Church, but sometimes in the churchyard or at the gates, and sometimes in the market-place. After the Reformation they were in many places kept up, and Dr. Cox gives an instance at Wootton, Hants, as late as the year 1680,³ “Payd to Mr. Laborne for reformyng the Resurrecion Play vijs. iiijd,” and in 1535 “Payd t Sr. Laborne for a boke of the ressurecion play for a qu’r of paper and for byndyng thereof lxs. ixd” occurs at Reading.⁴ In

¹ Quoted by Halliwell-Phillipps from the original MS. of Dugdale’s *Antiquities of Warwickshire* preserved at Merevale Hall.—Outlines.

² *Churchwardens’ Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth*, p. 266.

³ Ib., p. 270.

⁴ Ib., p. 270.

many places the church authorities kept a stock of players' clothes and let them out for hire.¹

These plays seem to have been continued as an effective means of teaching Scripture history and Christian doctrine, but also because it was a useful method of raising money; and it was for such reasons they were continued in many places after the Reformation. It is pretty certain that such church plays were generally "got up" by the people of the parish in which they took place, but not infrequently the professional players, who were constantly passing through the towns and villages, were paid for playing in the church. In 1572 the payment of 6s. 8d. to "the quenes plaiers in the Church"² occurs in the wardens' accounts of Bewdley, Worcestershire. As late as 1576, eightpence was paid "for mending of X broken holes in the church windowes which was done at the late playe."³

In the reign of Elizabeth, church vestments were sometimes converted into clothes for players. At Horblinge in Lincolnshire in 1566, "It'm two vestmentes . . . one Thomas Wrighte haith cut yt in peces and made bedde hangings thereof And thother was geven to Richard Colsonne a scoller and he haith made a players cote thereof."⁴ At the same church "Item three banner clothes—wch were given to Childeerne to make plaiers cotes of." At Waddingham "the banner clothes and crosse clothes were cutt in peces . . . and made playing cotes for children of them."⁵ At Welton juxta Louth in 1566 "Item ij albes wherof one was sold to iiij plaiers."⁶ In 1577 at Norwich, the Warden acknowledges from his predecessor the receipt of "All the game players gownes and coates that were made of certayne peces of old copies."⁷

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY LIFE—THE DEPARTURE

Since the first dawn of my interest in Shakespeare or his works, and before I had ever seen Stratford, it has always seemed to me that the most probable manner of his departure

¹ *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 21.

² Ib., p. 279.

³ Ib., p. 279.

⁴ Peacock, *Church Furniture*, pp. 107 and 108.

⁵ Ib., p. 157.

⁶ Ib., p. 160.

⁷ *Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 275.

from his native town was that he left with a band of travelling players, and that he left it when he was a boy. Nor at any subsequent time have I seen great reason to alter that opinion. The theory which has been generally held is, of course, that he remained in his native place until after his marriage in 1582, and that he left it in consequence of the enmity and prosecutions of Sir Thomas Lucy, whose deer he had stolen. There are, however, no solid facts to support this tradition, although for many years it has held a most important position in helping to fill the unfortunate gap in the annals of Shakespeare's early life. The first scene of the *Merry Wives of Windsor* seems to have been the origin of it. The clamour of "Mr. Justice Shallow" (who was obviously a rather savage caricature of somebody), his speeches to Falstaff charging him with having beaten his men, killed his deer and broken open his lodge, were very suggestive; and as Slender boasts of the "dozen white luces" in his cousin Shallow's coat, it all seemed to point directly to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. But there have always been some very awkward difficulties in the story, which after all is not older than the year 1700. It has always had to be touched up in one place and toned down in another to bring it to any semblance of historical reality, but nevertheless the idea gained much popularity, due perhaps to the attractiveness of its setting, the romantic background of venerable trees, the ancient house and lovely park with its herds of deer, which now grubbers among old manuscripts tell us were not there when the poet was young.

It does not seem at all probable that Shakespeare would wait ten or fifteen years before he retaliated, if he had any wish to throw ridicule on the Sir Thomas Lucy of his early days. Moreover, his "Justice Shallow" has no resemblance to that Sir Thomas Lucy, who was a grave and dignified statesman. I have sometimes thought that his son, another Sir Thomas, who succeeded to Charlecote in 600 and who might in some way have offended Shakespeare, might have borne greater resemblance to Justice Shallow; but now all such surmises are needless since Dr. Leslie Hotson has published his discoveries at the Record Office,¹ which show that the poet had

¹ Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare Versus Shallow*, 1931.

a bitter quarrel with a Mr. Justice Gardiner of Bermondsey, who was much more like Justice Shallow and who not only bore white lutes in his coat of arms, but was known and deservedly hated in London, so that every gibe about him would be recognized and relished by a London audience. Therefore there is every probability that Gardiner and not Lucy was being ridiculed.

May we not hope, then, that the biographers of the poet will now cease their contentions and let the Lucys and the Shakespeares rest in peace before the high-altar of Stratford's noble church. The only encroachment that the Shakespeares ever seem to have made against the owners of Charlecote was when their graves were excavated and their bodies laid where the bones of various Lucys were already interred. In his will of July 4, 1482, William Lucy, Knight, lord of Charlecote, left his "Soule to God fader of hevyn oure Ladye St. Marye etc." His "Bodye to be buried in the chauncel of the parishe churche of Stratforde upon Haven."¹ The will of his widow Alice dated 1494 is in Latin to the effect that she wishes to be buried before the high altar of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Trinity of Stratford-upon-Avon on the left of her venerable spouse William Lucy, Knight.²

The question still remains unanswered, "What became of Shakespeare after he left school?" That is the real "Shakespeare problem." At Stratford the facts concerning his life come to a sudden stop ere they had well begun. After his baptism in April 1564 no real tangible facts as to his movements are known until November 27, 1582, when his marriage licence was granted at Worcester.³

¹ P.C.C. 15 Dogett.

² "commendo animam meam deo omnipotente Beate Marie Virgini et omnibus sanctis, infra cancellam summo altari ecclesi collegiate Sancti Trinitatis de Stratford super Avonam ad sinistram venerabilis spousi mei Willielmi Lucy militis."—P.C.C. 2 Holder.

³ In Bishop Whitgift's register a licence was granted on November 27, 1582, for a marriage between William Shaxpere and Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton. On the next day a bond was entered into by Fulk Sandells and John Richardson on the issue of a marriage licence to William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway of Stratford on Avon.—J. W. Gray, *Shakespeare's Marriage and Departure from Stratford*, p. 9.

Till recent times the biographers of the poet have accepted the well-known statement made by John Aubrey "his father was a butcher and I have been told," etc. Some of them are still willing, in the absence of anything more reliable, to make use of it. As it was written between 1669 and 1696, and as there is nothing better with which to bridge the unfortunate gap in Shakespeare's early career, they have been reluctant to give up this piece of seventeenth-century gossip, though sometimes put to awkward expedients to retain it. Even Mr. J. W. Gray, whose book *Shakespeare's Marriage and Departure from Stratford* is otherwise based on absolute facts; and is most amply documented, quotes Aubrey, Dowdall, and Rowe and says, "Whether he was apprenticed to this trade, or assisted in it as one of the branches of his father's farming, wool-dealing or gloving business, there can be little doubt as to Shakespeare's youthful acquaintance with the practical work of the slaughter-house."¹

The truth is that the more the facts are revealed, the more certain it becomes that John Shakespeare could not have been a butcher; nor could he have conducted any such work in connection with his gloving or farming activities, and there is no evidence that he dealt in wool. His name is mentioned in the local records on a great many occasions, and though his occupation is given several times there is no suggestion in any instance that he was a butcher. This alone would be fatal to any such theory, for in the sixteenth century all such trades were carried on under severely defined restrictions and were not allowed to encroach on each other.

I believe, however, that although he meant them literally, there is no need to accept the statements of Aubrey in their literal sense. They are susceptible of a much more probable interpretation.

In all cases in which hearsay statements have been handed down orally they are very liable to become misunderstood by those who hear and pass them on: thus they get corrupted and garbled, and something of the sort seems to have happened to Aubrey's morsel of Shakespearean gossip. The first paragraph of his account is as follows:

"Mr. William Shakespeare was borne at Stratford-upon-

¹ J. W. Gray, *Shakespeare's Marriage and Departure from Stratford*, p. 110.

Avon in the county of Warwick. His father was a butcher and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he kill'd a calfe he would doe it in a high style, and make a speech. There was at that time another butcher's son in this towne that was held not at all inferior to him for a naturall witt, his acquaintance and coetanean but dyed young."¹

What is known as "Dowdall's Letter" was for some years held to give support to Aubrey's note. It purported to have been written in 1693, but is now strongly suspected of being a forgery. It says, "The clarke that shew'd me this church is above 80 years old; he says that this Shakespeare was formerly in this Towne bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he Run from his master to London and there was received into the play-house as a servitute."² Even if it was not a "fake" it was wrong, because the clerk in question was not as much as eighty years old, having been born on July 19, 1614. Moreover, the wording of it does not sound like the language of the seventeenth century.

In support of the statement that he was the son of a butcher, or at least was a butcher's apprentice, the references to that trade in Shakespeare's works have been counted. But when one examines the nature of these references they are found, almost invariably, to indicate an antipathy to the very word, and "butcher" is used as a term of reproach and denunciation. "Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals! How sweet a plant have you untimely cropp'd! You have no children, butchers!"³ In only two or three instances where the word is not used in that sense there are a few milder expressions. Here is one of them, "with no less confidence than boys pursuing summer butterflies, or butchers killing flies."⁴

¹ *Brief Lives, set down by John Aubrey between the years 1669 & 1696*, ed. Dr. A. Clark, pp. 225-7.

² See *Shakespeare's Marriage and Departure from Stratford*, by J. W. Gray, Appendix XXX. Mr. Gray told me that he felt certain the whole letter was a forgery. He says in the above Appendix: "My attempts to discover the MS. have been unsuccessful." He also says that the association with J. P. Collier's name will detract from the value of the parish clerk's anecdote.

³ *King Henry VI*, Act V, Sc. 5.

⁴ *Coriolanus*, Act IV, Sc. 6. Many years ago in a small butcher's shop in Derbyshire I saw the proprietor engaged in smashing bluebottle flies with a greasy-looking weapon made of leather shaped like a muffin hung on the end of a short stick. This was no doubt the ancient fly-flap known to Shakespeare.

If Shakespeare's mother had been the wife of a butcher, is it likely that he would have made Mistress Quickly refer in slighting terms to "goodwife Keech,¹ the butcher's wife"? Would she have been allowed to aver before the Chief Justice that Falstaff had sworn to her upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in her Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire upon the Wednesday in Whitsun-week when the Prince broke his head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor, that he had sworn to her then to marry her; and that goodwife Keech the butcher's wife came in then and called her "gossip Quickly"? And that "when she was gone down stairs," he desired her "to be no more so familiarity with such poor people"; saying that ere long they should call her madam?² On the contrary, there is evidence in the application for a coat of arms that he was proud of his ancestry.

If the literal view of Aubrey's pronouncement is no longer tenable, is there an alternative to it? Are his words capable of another interpretation? Let us see.

When Shakespeare was young there was in England an ancient dramatic performance known as *Killing the Calf*, which the 1852 edition of Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words* says, was "A kind of droll performance occasionally practised by vagrants in the North of England. It is said to be a very ancient amusement." The Rev. J. Raine of Durham, writing in 1836, in a Glossary to the Account Rolls of Finchale Priory, states that "there was an old dramatic representation called *Killing the Calf*. The performer played his part behind a door or curtain and by means of ventriloquism acted at once the butcher and the animal." Canon Raine then asks, "was this the calf which Shakespeare killed? and was his mighty mind first excited by his popular performance of this antient representation?"³ On reading this note more than forty years ago, it appeared to me to explain the whole mystery. I pointed it out to my brother Harold Baker, and he wrote an article on it and sent it to a Mr. Wall who was then Librarian at the Shakespeare Memorial, who

¹ A keech was the internal fat of an animal as rolled up for the tallow-chandler.

² *2 King Henry IV*, Act II, Sc. 1.

³ Page ccccxl.

printed it in a small local magazine called *The Shakespearean*, of which apparently very few copies have been preserved, those which had been stored in the tower of the old Memorial Theatre being burnt in the fire of 1926. I have not been able to find my brother's article in the few which remain. It seemed an inevitable conclusion that Aubrey's statements were nothing more than a garbled version of an old tradition, current in Stratford, that Shakespeare when a boy had been celebrated as an exceptionally clever actor of the *Killing the Calf* performance. While this performance was still in vogue, everybody who heard that William Shakespeare could "Kill the Calf in a high style and make a speech" knew what it meant.¹ But in later times, when this ventriloquial episode was lingering only in the northern parts of England, the tradition was mangled and misunderstood in Warwickshire, and took on its present misleading shape, by following which "some of the neighbours" bemused John Aubrey and since then many other people. Nothing is more probable than the absconding of such a boy with a group of strolling actors, and it is most likely that the other boy, who was also known as a gifted exponent of the killing-the-calf episode, would depart with him. Boys were always in demand among players to take the ladies' parts, as women were not then allowed to do so, and these two may have gone willingly, or they may perhaps have been enticed away, to act some "squeaking Cleopatra" or "boy the greatness" of stage Queens and counterfeit fine ladies. Players entering or leaving a town must have been a very striking and even fascinating spectacle. Studioso, in *The Returne from Pernassus*, tells us that "those glorious vagabonds, that carried earst their fardels on their backes" had "Coursers to ride on through the gazing streetes, Sooping in their glaring Satin sutes, And Pages to attend their maisterships."

¹ In costs of John Thurgode, lord of Misrule at Christmas 1521 is the: "Item pd. to a man at Wyndesore for kylling of a calffe before my ladys grace behind a clothe 8d., (a painted cloth hanging) for a man of Datchet for playing the friar afore the Princess 8d. and inter alia for straw that they were covered with in a disguising."—Brewer's *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. iii, part ii, p. 1100. 13 Henry VIII. "My ladys Grace" was the Princess Mary, afterwards the ruthless Queen.

It is not difficult to call up the vision of an eager, excitable, big-eyed boy (perhaps with his acquaintance and coetanean) as he emerged from Scholar's Lane, catching sight of a dazzling array of players moving off on their coursers; and, that his destiny might be fulfilled, following them.

Is it not quite possible that two such interesting boys might have attracted the notice of some wealthy patron and have been befriended by him? To be so befriended has been the fate of many poets and men of letters. Mr. George Saintsbury has said in writing of John Donne, the Elizabethan author and divine who was born in or about the year 1573: "The institution of great men's households which then prevailed provided a kind of liberal profession for men of parts, and gentle, but not distinguished birth; and Donne on his return to England joined the household of Chancellor Sir Thomas Egerton, afterwards Lord Ellesmere."¹

¹ Preface to the *Works of Donne*, ed. G. Saintsbury.

Chapter XIV

Alexander Houghton—Hesketh

THE date of Shakespeare's marriage in November 1582 is on record, and as he married a Stratford wife it has generally been assumed that he remained in his native town till after that date. It is quite usual for writers of aesthetic and critical studies of his works, as well as those who published biographies of the Poet, to use such expressions as "When Shakespeare left Stratford for London in 1587," whereas nobody knows when he left Stratford, nor where he went when he did leave, nor how long he stayed away. He may have gone away when he left school, he may have stayed away for years; he may have returned frequently, or only at long intervals.

Having a definite idea that Shakespeare was more likely to have left Stratford in his youth with a band of players than that he departed in any of the ways, or under the conditions that tradition has sketched for him, I always noted with interest all references to players of Elizabethan date that I came across, and in the spring of 1923 was much interested on reading a will that had been transcribed by the Rev. G. J. Piccope, and which had been printed by the Chetham Society in the year 1860. The testator, a gentleman of ancient family and a great land-owner, had shown an anxiety for the future of a band of players (who were evidently part of his household) and more especially two members of it. The will says that he had already by sufficient conveyance in the law disposed of all his manors, messuages, lands and tenements, to the upholding and maintenance of that house whereof he and all his ancestors had lineally descended. He had left almost all his property to his brother.

The testator was Alexander Hoghton or Houghton of Lea, in the county of Lancaster, an ancestor of Sir James de Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower, the present head of this very ancient family, he (Alexander) made his will in August 1581, and it was proved in September 1581.¹

The Chetham Society copy has the following passages. "I make my sole executrix Elixabeth my welbelove wyffe and yf she^e doe refuse or shall fortune to dye in my lyffe tyme then I wyll that my lovinge brother in law Thomas Heskethe of Grayes Inne in the countye of Myddlesex Gentleman and my trustie and wellbeloved servantes George Beseley and James Helme shal be my Executors."

After bequests to his wife and illegitimate daughter is the following (Fig. 78): "Yt ys my wyll that Thomas Heughton of Bryne-Scoules my brother shall haue all my instruments belonginge to mew sycke and all man^r of playeclothes yf he be minded to keeppe and do keppe players. And yf he wyll not keppe and manteyne players then it is my wyll that Sr Thomas Heskethe, Knyghte, shall haue the same instruments and playe clothes and I most hertelye requyre the said Sr Thomas to be ffrendlye unto froke Gylome and Willm Shakeshaftे now dwelling with me. And ether take theym unto his servyce or els to helpe theym to some mr" (master).

On reading thus far into the will I was arrested by the thought that Shakeshaftē was the name of the Poet's grandfather, and the exciting idea entered my head, was this young Shakespeare and his acquaintance and coetanean, who was held not at all inferior to him for a natural wit, but died young?

If the name of the second player had been Shakespeare it would have been still more exciting, but one can say that Shakeshaftē was a name of the Poet's grandfather, and also of at least one other ancestor; and it would not be very surprising if the Poet had slightly altered his name on going away, possibly without his parents' consent.

It would have helped the problem if one could have turned to the Register of the Stratford Parish Church and there have

¹ Chetham Society, vol. mdccclx.

found the baptism of Fulke Gillom, in or about 1564. It is, however, not to be found there, but this I can say, that Fulke (spelt also Ffoke, Fowke, etc.) seems to be a rare Christian name in most parts of England, and that in the Stratford district it was numerous in several places. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries this was probably because of the great reputation of three local men. Fulke Greville, the poet-statesman, Earl of Warwick, etc., was born in 1554 (so was a contemporary of Shakespeare) and was buried there in the chapter house of St. Mary's Church. His father, another Fulke, lived at Beauchamp Court, near Alcester, was knighted 1565, became Member of Parliament and died in 1606.

The effigy of the grandfather, Fulke Greville, to whom in 1541 Henry VIII gave the site of the monastery near Alcester (where Beauchamp Court was erected) and many neighbouring estates, lies with that of his wife on a very fine tomb in Alcester Church.

In local records of Elizabethan date the name is often found. Fulke Sandells was one of the signatories to Shakespeare's marriage licence bond, but so far as I have explored, I have not found any instance of a Fulke Gillom. There were plenty of Gilloms at Bidford on Avon, a large village five miles from Stratford. At Henley in Arden are various instances of Gillom and Fulke.¹

Continuing to study the will which, after leaving five pounds to Sir William Walke, clerk, and twenty shillings to his, Sir William's, servant, goes on:

"To everye one of my servants that shall fortune to be in my servyce at the tyme of my dycease and is hyrede wth me for yerelye wayges one whoule yeres wayges and whereas I the said Alexander and the said Thomas Houghton my younger brother in consideraceon of an agreement betwene the said Thomas and me for the establisshinge of all my manors lands and tentis upon the said Thomas and the heires malle by or dede 20 julye 1580 I have graunted unto Thomas ffletwoode sonne and heire apparette of John ffletwoode of Penworthhame Esquyre and unto Robert Talbote the anewall rente of sextyne pounde thryttee shillinge ffoure pence issuynage oute of

¹ *Records of Henley in Arden*, pp. 40, 51, 57.

certeyne my lande in Wythnell to have the said yearlye rente
durieng the naturall lyves of these my scrvante.”¹

He then gives a list of thirty-one servants, whose names are not specially noteworthy, except “Rycharde ffysheweke” (who may have been an ancestor of the antiquary who wrote the *History of Preston*) “ffoke Gyllo Willm Shakeshaft, Thomas Gyllo & Roger Dugdayle.”

It is interesting that many of these servants get thirteen shillings and fourpence each, while fflowke Gylome & Willm Shakeshaft, Thomas Gylome & Roger Dugdayle all get forty shillings a year each. The will says further that the portion of any that die shall be equally divided amongst those that survive, so that the survivor of them shall have for his life the whole rent of sixteen pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence.

Finally he desires that his trusty and loving friends, John Talbot of Saleburye,² Edward Standyshe of Standyshe, Esquire, Thomas ffletwode and his brother-in-law Bartholomew Hesketh be supervisors.

Alexander Houghton of Lea expressed in his will the wish to be buried with his ancestors in the Parish Church of Preston, but that building has been restored and rebuilt so often that there are only a few, and those of late dates, of the memorials of the past generations to be found there. Fishwick's *History of Preston* says that in 1855 almost every vestige of the old building was swept away and the present church erected.³

I am presuming that the two servants in whom Alexander Houghton was greatly interested were young men, and that they were players. He does not say that any of the people mentioned in his will are players, but it is quite certain, from the context, that most of them were.

He is not likely to have implored Sir Thomas Hesketh to take into his service two superannuated old men, but if William Shakespeare and his acquaintance and coetanean were the two boys, they would without doubt have greatly interested any cultured patron of players.

¹ Players were always called servants and Alexander Hoghton makes a “servant” one of his two executors.

² Not Salisbury, but a Lancashire village.

³ Page 117.

How would he get there? We know that the players like most other people travelled on horseback. Shakespeare was young. There would be no great difficulty in accomplishing such a journey. Stratford was a Roman settlement, and in recent times great quantities of Roman articles, pottery and weapons, as well as many Saxon antiquities, have been found there, also the town was near to three great Roman roads, Watling Street, the Fosse Way and Rykneild Street.

The author of the *History of Preston*, Mr. H. Fishwick, F.S.A., says: "Not long after the Romans became masters of the land north of the Ribble, they began to establish strongholds in various parts of it. One of the earliest and most impregnable of these was at Ribchester, from whence a road was constructed which crossed Fulwood Moor, intersecting the road to Garstang and going over Cadeley Moor, must have then passed through the hamlets of Cottam and Ingol, & probably Lea and Ashton on its way to Kirkham and finally to the coast."¹

Exactly what happened at the death of Alexander Houghton of Lea is difficult to discover. There is no evidence that his successor at Lea Hall was minded to keep, or ever did keep players, so all the instruments belonging to music and all the players' clothes would seem to have passed to Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford, who must, from the tenor of the will, have been a patron of players. There is very little that I have found traceable concerning Thomas Houghton of Brynescoules, but that little suggests that his tastes did not resemble those of Alexander, who was only his *half* brother. Thomas lived on bad terms with his neighbours, and a quarrel with one of them culminated in an attack on Lea Hall, in which Thomas was killed.

In the *History of Preston*, by H. Fishwick, F.S.A., he says, "Thomas Houghton of Lea was not as is frequently stated, slain in a duel, but he met his death in a free fight on 21st November 1589. Ill feeling existed between Thomas Langton, the Baron of Newton, & Thomas Hogton, which was brought to a crisis by the former espousing the cause of Thomazine,

¹ Pages 6 and 7. This shows that even in very remote times there was a good road all the way.

the widow of John Singleton of Stanning, whose cattle had been impounded at Lea.

"At 1 A.M. on 21st November Thomas Langton, Wm Singleton and others in two detatchments, entered the court-yard of Lea, one through the gate, and the other by breaking the hedge. They were armed with pikes, guns, staves, welsh hooks, or long staves, swords, daggers, bows, arrows and bills; and for a watchword they had, 'The Crow is white.' The night before, whilst they were assembling on Preston Marsh, Thomas Houghton heard of the contemplated attack, and promptly armed his servants and had a gun charged with shot, pistols and other weapons in readiness.

"When the two parties met there was a regular fight during which Houghton and one Bawdwen were slain, and Langton sore wounded."¹

THE EARL OF DERBY INTERVENES

Baines' *History of Lancashire*² mentions this memorable fight at Lea Hall in the twenty-third year of Elizabeth between Mr. Thomas Houghton and the Baron of Newton, in which the former was slain. A number of rioters were seized and indicted, and the Earl of Derby, on their behalf, wrote to Lord Burghley: "The lawe havinge hadd his full course, the better sorte (whoe remayneonlie in p'ill of burninge in the hande) leavinge the poorer or more gyltes people the more endangered. Nowe for that not onlie theire pryuate harme but the vndoinge of theire wyves & children consistethe in what must be theire hoppe herin, I shall beceech your L. to deale wth her Matie for them, that they maye haue theire Perdons before the Assyzed, syncer verie manye of them cannot reade, & are therefore lyke to loos theire lyves, if they fayle of suche her gratiouse favr. And for that the better sorte are soe greate in kinredd & affynitie & soe stoared withe frendes, as yf they shoulde be burnte in the hande, I feare it will fall oute to be A ceasles & the moste dangerous quarrell betwixt the gentle-

¹ *De Houghton Papers*, State Papers Dom. Ser. CCXXIX, 633, Whittakers Whalley, new edition.

² Vol. iv, p. 368.

men that any Countrie of her Maties hath theis manye Yeares conteyned. I have thoughte it my pte to make knowne the same, and to wishe that some contented courts by bannishment."

In 1592 Mrs. Hoghton, the widow of Thomas, was reported to the Government for keeping at Lea, Richard Blundell, brother to William Blundell, of Crosbie, Gentleman, who was an obstinate Papist well acquainted with Seminaries, & he was teaching the children to "sing & pliae upon the virginalls."

Alexander Hoghton was a Protestant, but apparently his brother's widow was not.

LEA HALL TO-DAY

What remains of Lea Old Hall stands in the fields on the north shore of the Ribble estuary. Near it the Salwick Brook makes a diminutive estuary of its own, and at high tide serves as a moat on that side of the house. As seen from the highway it promises no sign of antiquity, but rather resembles a large farm-house of the last century, but on the side towards the Ribble its tall elevation is much more interesting. There it is easy to recognize that the ornamental timbers of an oak-framed manor-house such as are more perfectly preserved at Samlesbury, Denton, Hall'i'th'Wood, and other fine old Lancashire mansions, more especially at Rufford, have here at Lea been almost entirely replaced by Queen Anne or Georgian brickwork.

At the eaves the medieval coving of plaster and oak ribs is still in position undisturbed, and has below it a very massive wall-plate beam carved with the billet moulding, but these are the only external features of the original house remaining.

Within there are several rooms on the ground-floor in which finely moulded oak posts can be seen which reach from the ground to the roof. There are also shapely beams supporting the ceilings. On the first floor the same moulded uprights are again visible, and at the end of the building one can, by ascending to an attic, see the massive timbers of the first great truss of a series, which formed an elaborate roof to what must have been originally a very noble great chamber.

It is now divided into various bedrooms and passages, as is a somewhat similar apartment at Samlesbury Hall on the other side of Preston.

But at Samlesbury a great deal more of the original house has survived, though terribly mangled by foolish restorations, cast-iron "gothic" windows and other horrors. At Lea there is no more than one wing of the original house, though the tenant told me that in the farm buildings he believed there were parts of the old timbers of the hall. I could not, however, find any, though the buildings are large and cover much ground.

Across the Ribble, two or three miles nearer the sea, is the River Asand or Douglas, one side of which is called Hesketh Bank, and a little higher up that stream is Rufford Hall, the once magnificent seat of the Heskeths. It is still, perhaps, the finest and most gorgeous example of a late Gothic hall entirely built of oak beams, which remains among the old halls of Lancashire and Cheshire.

THE HOUGHTON WILL

Having ascertained that the will was in the Probate Registry of the Ecclesiastical Court at Chester, I went there, and in an old house in the ancient street called Whitefriars, asked to see the will and copied out the passages that seemed the most interesting.

Externally it is nearly black with the dust of ages, but within, fortunately, the parchment has remained exceptionally white, and the writing is quite legible. I found that the document is a very long one and that the Rev. G. J. Piccopic had not got his copy absolutely accurate or full, though we must all feel extremely grateful for the enthusiasm and persistence which enabled him to copy so many wills of great interest, some of which in the course of time have disappeared.

But some months later I went to Chester again and got photographs of the most interesting passages and also of the whole will, but did not say why I wanted them.

These photographs I took to London, and in the Reading-Room of the MSS. Department of the British Museum showed

them to Mr. D. T. B. Wood, an official of the Manuscript Department. Mr. Wood, to my relief, did not turn down my theory, but when he had reached down the volume of the Chetham Society, compared it with my photographs, and heard what I had to say in the way of throwing light on the problem of Shakespeare's early life, he said, "I can't help feeling excited about this." He was quite willing to give his blessing to my task and advised that I should see if any Warwickshire names occurred among Alexander Hoghton's players.

I continued to search for more evidence, and hoped to find at least traces at Hoghton Tower amongst the documents of Sir James de Hoghton, but the present Baronet gave no hope of finding any of Shakespearean interest in that wonderfully situated and extremely beautiful old mansion.

From many passages in his works it is certain that Shakespeare had an enthusiastic and discerning love of music, and if he was one of the players in the household of Alexander Houghton of Lea, he would have every chance of acquiring his knowledge of and delight in music. It was usual for the great and wealthy in Elizabethan times to receive an acquaintance with, and often a love for music, as part of their education. When they came to have establishments of their own, those of their servants who were apt and had any enthusiasm for the task were trained as musicians, and had to provide instrumental or vocal music for them and their guests. It was known as "the music of the house." When, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia and Nerissa are returning to Belmont, along the avenue Portia says, "Music! Hark!" and Nerissa replies, "It is your music, madam, of the house."¹

As the protégé of a rich music-lover who had a number of musical instruments sufficiently valuable to be specially bequeathed, it would show how easily the poet might have acquired his knowledge of and great love for music.

We have no means of knowing precisely how many or what kind of instruments belonging to music Alexander Hoghton possessed, but we can get a good idea of the sort by studying the following list, and of the music his musicians played:

¹ Act V, Sc. i.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AT HENGRANGE IN SUFFOLK IN 1603.

In ye chamber where ye musicyons playe.

Itm hangings of blewe and yellow raye complete.

„ one long bord with ij tressels.

„ one long joyned forme and one playne forme.

Instrewnments and Books of Musicke.

Itm one borded chest, with locke and key wth vj vialls.

„ one borded chest, with six violenns.

„ one case of recorders in nomber viij.

„ iiij cornutes one being a mute cornute.

„ one great base lewte and a meane lewte, both wthout cases.

„ one trebble lute, and a meane lute with cases.

„ one bandore, and a sitherne with a dooble case.

„ two sackboots wth ther cases.

„ three hoeboys, wth a curtail and a lysarden.

„ two flewtes, wthout cases.

„ one payer of little virginalls.

„ one wind instrument like a virginall.

„ two lewting books covered with lether.

„ vj bookes covered with pchment. contg vj setts in a book, with songs of iiij, v, vj, vij, and viij partes.

„ v books covered wth pchment. contg iij setts in a book, with songs of v ptes.

„ vj books, covered wth pchment. contg ij setts in a book, with English songs of iiij, v, and vj partes.

„ v books, covered with pchment, wth pavines. galliards, measures and country dances.

„ v books of levaultoes and corrantoes.¹

„ v old bookes covered wth pchment with songs of v partes.

„ v bookes covered wth blacke lether.

„ iiij books covered wth pchment, wth songes of iiij partes.

„ v books covered wth pchment, wth pavines and galliards:² for the consert.

„ one great booke wh came from Cadis, covered wth redd lether, and gylt.

„ v books contg one sett of Italiany fa-laes.

„ one great payer of dooble virginalls.

„ one payer of great orgaynes.³

¹ *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Sc. 3: "Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto?"

² *Twelfth Night*, Act I, Sc. 3.

³ *Antiquities of Hengrave*, pp. 23, 24, 25.

SIR THOMAS HESKETH OF RUFFORD

In searching for more details concerning this Sir Thomas Hesketh, I found several pedigrees of the family among the British Museum MSS., but the most interesting of all was one which was shown to me by Lord Hesketh (then Sir Thomas Fermor-Hesketh, Bart.) at Easton Neston, his Northamptonshire seat. This wonderful pedigree has not only a very long series of coats of arms blazoned in their various tinctures, but is a most valuable work of art also, having in circular medallions a portrait of and a written account of each ancestor. It was originally on a very long roll of vellum, but at some later time has been bound up into an enormous book, so that every item can be studied in detail.

Over the painting of an oldish knight in armour, and another of his wife, "Dame Alice one of the doughters to Sir John Holcroft Knight," is an inscription within a red border which reads, with contractions extended, as follows:

"This Syr Thomas Heskaithe knight serued his souvraigne in Scotland and at the Seigh of Leethe and theare was sore hurte in diverse places & had his ensigns strooken downe which hee recouered againe with great commendacione for his forwardines seruice And was in his latter dayes a noteable great houskeeper and Benefactor to all men singular in euery science and greatlie repaired the house at Martholme and Homes wood and the chappell at Rufford."

Since I saw it, this wonderful manuscript has been presented by Lord Hesketh to the British Museum (B.M., Add. Ms. 44 026).

THOMAS HESKETH OF GRAY'S INN

At first I had thought that the Sir Thomas Hesketh of the will must have been he who was a distinguished member of Gray's Inn, and *ante* 1568 of Hart Hall, Lancs., who was admitted in 1572, gave £3 6s. 8d. towards the building of the Holborn Gate in 1593, and was buried in Westminster Abbey 1605. He was a member of the same Hesketh family, but as

he was not knighted till 1603, the friend to whom Alexander Houghton appealed must have been his neighbour across the Ribble Estuary, Lord of the Manor of Rufford, and of many other manors and mansions, a celebrated figure in the sixteenth century, and an ancestor of the present Lord Hesketh.

Of this Sir Thomas of Rufford it is recorded that he "was in his later dayes a notable great housekeeper and benefactor to all men singular in every science." It therefore seems certain that he would accede to Alexander Houghton's urgent request and take Fowke Gillon and Will Shakeshaft into his household, and that they would continue to be players.

But Sir Thomas Hesketh died in 1587.

He was an old man and would be likely to give up his company of players some years before he died.

If Fulke Gillom was the coetanean and "died young," possibly William Shakeshaft may have been handed over to the "loving brother-in-law Thomas Hesketh of Gray's Inn in the county of Middlesex, Gentleman." This would solve the mystery of his obtaining an insight into legal technicalities, an insight which has puzzled lawyers and laymen for more than a century.

In the edition of Shakespeare's works which Edward Malone published in 1790, he drew attention to his extraordinary knowledge of the law and his continual employment of legal phraseology. Malone wrote: "his knowledge of legal terms is not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind; it has the appearance of *technical* skill, and he is so fond of displaying it on all occasions that I suspect he was early initiated in at least the forms of the law."

Such surmises are fascinating to indulge in, but then looms up the portentous question of dates. Would such a theory bear the test of comparison with known and proven facts?

The date of the will is August 27, 1581. As Shakespeare was baptized in April 1564, he would be seventeen when the will was made. In November 1582 Shakespeare was married in the Diocese of Worcester, but at what church has never been discovered. Mr. J. W. Gray, who is the most cautious and accurate of biographers, says: "If he married before leaving

Stratford the ceremony was probably performed in one of the neighbouring churches in which the registers have not been preserved, and of these the claims of Temple Grafton and Luddington are perhaps stronger than others. If he had already left home and was travelling with a company of players, the marriage may have been the object of a visit to some convenient place in the old diocese of Worcester agreed upon for the purpose. The possibility of a personal application for the licence at Worcester Registry lends some support to the hypothesis that the church of Saint Martin in that city was selected."¹

Mr. Gray then saw no reason why a Stratford youth who travelled about with a band of players should not have visited the diocese of Worcester in order to get married. It seems quite possible if Shakespeare was one of Alexander Houghton's players that, when he found that he was going to have a bequest of a year's wages, and also an annuity for the rest of his life, beginning in 1581, he made excursions to Stratford, became betrothed to Anne Hathaway, and later married her.

In early times dramatic performances were chiefly in the nature of what were called Miracle plays, Moralities and Interludes, which gradually led to less crude and more realistic comedies, that in the sixteenth century were followed by classical subjects, the euphuistic creations of Lyly, the melodramas of Marlow, Kyd, Greene and Peel. It was approaching this latter period that Shakespeare is known to have reached London, but how long he had been there has not been ascertained, all the dates suggested being only guesswork.

If I am right in supposing that he was taken under the wing of Thomas Hesketh, he may have been brought to London by him and entered as a student at Gray's Inn. No evidence has been found of the Poet having studied there, but there is no question but that he was well acquainted with the place and that no record remains there of many of its students; also it is a notable fact that nearly every one of his patrons and known friends was a member of that ancient Institution.

They are cited in an interesting lecture given by Sir Plunket Barton a few years ago at the fiftieth annual conference of the

¹ *Shakespeare's Marriage and Departure from Stratford*, p. 114.

Société Inter. de Philologie, Sciences et Beaux-Arts, held in London.

At Gray's Inn Sir Plunket Barton welcomed the visitors to the hall in which *The Comedy of Errors* was acted by Shakespeare's company in 1594, and he advised them to pay a visit to the Hall of the Middle Temple, where *Twelfth Night* was acted in 1602. He said: "When Shakespeare came to London the Inns of Court were two hundred years old, and the Halls of Gray's Inn and of the Middle Temple are substantially in the same condition to-day as when he saw them in the closing years of the sixteenth century. Shakespeare made the Temple Gardens the scene of the prelude of the Wars of the Roses, he painted the lighter side of the life of a law student of that day in the character of Justice Shallow. In Shakespeare's day nearly all his patrons, protectors and friends were members of Gray's Inn. They included Lord Strange, in whose company of players he began his career as an actor; Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain, in whose company he was afterwards employed; Lord Southampton, to whom he dedicated his earliest poems; and Lord Pembroke, to whom the players dedicated the First Folio. It was a curious coincidence that Francis Bacon, Lord Oxford, and Lord Rutland, to each of whom some ingenious writers have attributed the authorship of the Shakespearean plays, were members of Gray's Inn. Those interesting theories found very little favour among its members. They preserved dutifully the memory of their own great men, but at the same time they took pleasure in rendering unto Shakespeare the things which were Shakespeare's."

Supposing that the William Shakeshaft of the will was the great poet from Stratford, it seems certain that Sir Thomas Hesketh must have taken an interest in him as Alexander Houghton had begged him to do. If this was so, it is probable that he would continue to work as a player. Sir Thomas would not be long in discovering that the youthful Shakeshaft was a boy of exceptional ability.

At Rufford, as at Lea Hall, the young Poet most probably took the parts of ladies, and was told to "bear himself with honourable action, such as he hath observed in noble ladies unto their lords, by them accomplished"; as the Lord in the

Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew* directs his page to do, and later says, "I know the boy will well usurp the grace, voice, gait and action of a gentlewoman."

The first trace of Shakespeare's presence in London may be searched for in *An Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities*, written by Thomas Nashe, and prefixed to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* published in 1589. It is a very long and obscurely worded tirade, but there are some parts, of which extracts are here given, which have caused much discussion among learned scholars, without leading to definite results.

• It begins: "Cvrteous and wise, whose iudgements (not entangled with enuie) enlarge the deserts of the learned by your liberall censures; vouchsafe to welcome your Scholler-like Shepheard with such Vniuersity entertainment as either the nature of your bounty or the custome of your common ciuility may afforde. . . . I am not ignorant how eloquent our gowned age is grown of late; so that euery mechanicall mate abhorreth the English he was borne too, and plucks with a solemne periphrases, his *vt vales* from the inkchorne: which I impute, not so much to the perfection of Arts, as to the seruile imitation of vaine glorious Tragedians, who contend not so seriously to excell in action, as to embowell the cloudes in a speech of comparison, thinking themselues more then initiated in Poets immortality, if they but once get Boreas by the beard and the heavenly Bull by the deaw-lap. But herein I cannot so fully bequeath them to folly, as their ideot Art-masters, that intrude themselues to our eares as the Alcumists of eloquence who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) thinke to out-braue better pennes with the swelling bumbast of bragging blanke verse. Indeede it may bee the ingrafted ouerflow of some kil-cow conceit, that ouercloyeth their imagination with a more then drunken resolution, being not extemporall in the inuention of any other meanes to vent their manhoode, commits the digestion of their cholericke incumbrances to the spacious volubilitie of a drumming decasillabon."

In the above extracts Thomas Nashe is evidently attacking a group of players, tragedians who were making use of bombastic blank verse, among whom I think that Shakespeare was especially aimed at. Nashe was a friend of Robert Greene (he

calls him "sweet friend" in this same work)¹ and had much the same reasons for being jealous of him. In Greene's attack on young "Shake-scene" he says that "he supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you."

Nashe consigns to "folly" the vainglorious tragedians, the idiot art-masters that from the stage are spouting "to our ears" as the alchemists of eloquence who think to out-brave better pens with the swelling bumbast of bragging blank verse. He suggests, moreover, that this out-braving and bragging "may bee the ingrafted ouerflow of some kil-cow conceit, that ouercloyeth their imagination with a more then drunken resolution," etc.

This would seem to be a malicious reference to the rumours that credited Shakespeare with being a performer in his early days, in the killing-the-calf conceit. There does not seem to be any other explanation for it.

Later in the same work Nashe returns to the attack: "I'le turne back to my first text of Studies of delight and talke a little in friendship with a few of our triviall translators. It is a common practise now a dayes amongst a sort of shifting companions that runne through euery Art and thrive by none to learne the trade of *Nouerint* whereto they were borne and busie themselves with the indeuors of Art, that could scarcely Latinize their neck verse² if they should haue neede; yet English *Seneca* read by Candle-light yeelds many good sentences, as *Blood is a begger*, and so forth; and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, hee will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfuls of Tragical speeches. But O grieve! *Tempus edax rerum*, what's that will last always? The Sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance bee drie, and *Seneca*, let blood line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our Stage; which makes his famished followers to imitate the Kidde in *Aesop*, who enamoured with the Foxes newfangles, forsooke all hopes of life to leape into a newe occupation."

In the year 1859 Lord Campbell, who was then Lord Chief Justice, wrote a long reply to J. Payne Collier on the question

¹ R. B. McKerrow, *Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. cxi, p. 312.

² See page 194.

of Shakespeare's legal acquirements, and afterwards printed it in a small book with many quotations of legal expressions extracted from the plays and poems. He says, "rivals whom he surpassed not only envied Shakespeare, but grossly libelled him," and proceeds to quote from Nashe's Epistle, beginning, "I will turn back to my first text," and ending, "must needs die to our stage." Lord Campbell then explains that in Elizabeth's reign deeds were in the Latin tongue and all deeds poll and many other law papers began with the words "*NOUERINT vniuersi per presentes*," which, of course, means, "Be it known unto all men by these presents" . . .

The puzzle seems to hinge on *what* Nashe meant by the trade of Nouerint, as well as who he meant. As Lord Campbell points out almost all deeds began with those words, *Nouerint vniuersi per presentes*. Therefore a young law student or attorney's clerk would as a matter of course spend a great deal of his time in writing the word *Nouerint*, and there would be every excuse for a looker-on to write that he was one of those who had left the trade of Nouerint whereto they were born and busy themselves with . . . , etc.

On the other hand, a scrivener was a man who had a shop in which he was prepared to write *anything* that he was paid to write, and it does not appear that he would necessarily be often asked to execute Latin deeds for lawyers. According to the documents of the London Guild of Scriveners that would seem to be part of their work, but only a part. Also the *New English Dictionary* gives a number of quotations in which the work of a scrivener is mentioned, and only one exhibits him as having to execute legal documents.

Here are two examples in 1602: "This fellow came into a Scrivener's shop to have a letter written to his wife's mother." Prior More of Worcester frequently employed two scriveners during the years that his *Journal* covers, and not once were they employed on deeds but either on service books or sometimes to write up the Prior's *Journal*.

Probably the Kidde in *Aesop* meant Thomas Kyd, but by *Nouerint* surely he sneered at Shakespeare, who had left the study of Law and had written a crude and bloodthirsty *Hamlet* probably at the instigation of Henslow; the times

demanded thrillers. Shakespeare wrote the early play, *Titus Andronicus*; and why not the early *Hamlet* as another pot-boiler? Later came finished work: the early *Hamlet* has some fine and characteristic phrases worthy of Shakespeare.

Nash knew that this upstart crow had written an early version of the *Hamlet* tragedy and that he had borrowed parts of it from Seneca.

"TITUS ANDRONICUS" AND "HAMLET" PLAYS

Sir Sidney Lee says: "Of the many testimonials paid to Shakespeare's reputation as both poet and dramatist at this period of his career, the most striking was that of Francis Meres. Meres was a learned graduate of Cambridge University, a divine and schoolmaster, who in 1598 brought out a collection of apophthegms, on morals, religion and literature, which he entitled, *Palladis Tamia, or Wits Treasury.*"¹

In the list of Shakespeare's plays that Meres printed is *Titus Andronicus*, and it was also included by Heminge and Condell in the Folio of 1623. We are bound, therefore, however unwillingly, to accept it as an early work of Shakespeare. There is no probability that he chose to write that sort of play, but such plays had been very successful in earning money and Henslow must have been very pleased with it. Neither Francis Meres, nor Heminge and Condell, would have been keen upon claiming such a play as *Titus* for Shakespeare, if there had been any doubt that he wrote it.

There can be little question that it was written at the request of Henslow, or that Shakespeare when he began his dramatic career also wrote other crude and bloody plays, which have gone without leaving much trace. There was an old play of *Hamlet* of which some fragments remain. Sir Sidney Lee says, "The first Elizabethan play which presented Hamlet's tragic fortunes has not survived, save possibly in a few fragments, which are imbedded in a piratical and crudely printed first edition of Shakespeare's later play, as well as in a free German adaptation of somewhat mysterious origin. But external evidence proved that an old piece called *Hamlet* was in existence

¹ Sidney Lee, p. 258.

in 1589—soon after Shakespeare joined the theatrical profession. In that year the pamphleteer Tom Nashe credited a writer whom he called English Seneca with the capacity of penning ‘whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls of tragical speeches.’ Nashe’s English Seneca may be safely identified with Thomas Kyd, a dramatist whose bombastic and melodramatic Spanish Tragedie, containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Bel-Imperia, with the pittiful death of olde Hieronimo, was written about 1586, and held the breathless attention of the average Elizabethan playgoer for at least a dozen years.”¹

Thus thought Sir Sidney Lee, but there is no reason why Shakespeare should not have written it.

If the *Hamlet* that Nash knew was more ghastly even than *Titus Andronicus*, it does not follow that Shakespeare did not write it. Many great men, both writers and painters, have had to execute “pot-boilers,” not because they wished to, but in order to get the money wherewith to live.

David Cox, the great landscape painter, began his art career apprenticed to a miniature painter, and after that was scene-painter to Macready. Before he died his paintings were being sold at several thousands of pounds each, and after his death for more still.²

Jean François Millet, the painter of *The Angelus* and *The Gleaners*, with many other celebrated pictures of French farming life, for years had to paint the kind of picture which dealers thought would be most likely to sell. The author of his life says, “At this period of his career Millet was chiefly famous for his undraped nymphs and fauns: his brother artists called him *le maître du nu*. Women bathing or resting under trees, children at play, etc.”³

These paintings are no more like those which made him famous throughout the civilized world than *Titus Andronicus* is like *Twelfth Night*.

Professor J. Churton Collins says in *Studies in Shakespeare*: “It may be said without reserve that, if Shakespeare was not the author of *Titus Andronicus*, there is an end to circum-

¹ Sidney Lee, p. 357.

² N. Neal Solly, *Life of David Cox*, 1873, pp. 4–7.

³ Paul Gsell, *Life of J. F. Millet*, translated by Lewis May 1928. ⁴ Page 104.

stantial testimony in literary questions; for the evidence external and internal is as conclusive as such evidence can possibly be."

In discussing this question of who was Nashe aiming his shafts at, which by the way would be quite understood by the people who were intended to read them, the motive was undoubtedly jealousy. I think that Nashe was jeering at *two* tragedians at least; not once is the word "he" or "him" used, it is always in the plural, and took pleasure in classing Shakespeare, who must have been known to have left the study of law, along with Kyd, who may have worked at his father's business as a scrivener.

"The birth of Kyd may be fixed beyond reasonable doubt at the year 1558. He was entered on the books of the Merchant Taylors' School, must have shown that he knew the catichisme in English and Latin and could read perfectly and write competently, no mean accomplishment for a boy of seven. He was familiar with a wide range of Latin authors. He had Seneca's dramas at his fingers' ends, next to Seneca Virgil. With French and Italian he was familiar, there seems to be no reason why Nash should fling the scornful epithets at Kyd of 'scarcely Latinise the neck verse.'"¹

In 1592 a small book containing a very similar attack was made on the young Shakespeare by a friend of Thomas Nash, a friend who after a life of reckless dissipation was dying of want. The earliest surviving copy is dated 1596. It is called, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance*. Robert Greene, whose savage attack on the young Shakespeare is now of the most priceless value in recording the presence of the Poet in London and in showing how he was employed, was a close friend of Nash. Greene and Nash were at one in their jealousy of Shakespeare, and in sneering at him they both used the same expression, "Bombast of a bragging blank verse."

The *Groatsworth of Wit* was printed after the death of Greene by Henry Chettle, who was himself ambitious to shine as a dramatist, and in the following December published an apology for Greene's effusion as a preface to a small work

¹ *Boas, Introduction, xiv.*

which he called *Kind Hartes Dreame*. Greene addresses his appeal, written very shortly before his death in September 1592, "To those Gentlemen, his quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies R. G. wishes a better exercise, and wisdome to prevent his extremities."

After a long and impassioned appeal to two literary friends or former friends he addresses a third as follows: "And thou, no lesse deserving than the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferiour; driven (as myselfe) to extreame shifts; a little have I to say to thee; and were it not an idolatrous oth, ·I would sweare by sweet S. George thou art unworthie better hap, sith thou dependest on so meane a stay. Base minded men al three¹ of you, if by my miserie ye be not warned; for unto none of you like me, sought those burres to cleave; those puppits, I meane, that speake from our mouths, those anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I to whom they have al beene beholding, is it not like that you to whome they all have beene beholding, shall, were ye in that case that I am now, be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide: supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse* as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions!"

Greene had left his *Groatsworth of Wit* with other literary work in the hands of a printer, from whom it was obtained by Henry Chettle who printed it, so the blame was transferred from Nashe to Chettle, who admitted afterwards a certain amount of blameworthiness in an apology in *Kind Hartes Dreame*, a tract which he published December 1592.

Chettle wrote: "About three moneths since died M. (Master) Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry book-sellers hands, among other his Groass-worth of Wit, in which a letter written to divers Play-makers, is offensively by one or two of

¹ Greene does not give the names of the three writers, but they were obviously Marlow, George Peele, and Thomas Nash.

them taken; and because on the dead, they cannot be avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a living author; and after tossing it two and fro, no remedy but it must light on me.

"I am sorry as if the original fault had beene my fault, because myselfe have seene his demeanour no lesse civill than he exelent in the qualitie he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightnes of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that aprooves his art."

It had been at first supposed that Thomas Nashe was the real author of Greene's attack, and this suggestion was quite a natural one, if he had directed his former fling at Shakespeare in the Preface to *Menaphon*, as I believe he had. But the poet was in 1592 a more important person than the amateur of 1589, and already Nashe had changed his attitude to Shakespeare very promptly and strongly denied in the Preface to *Pierce Peniless* that there was any truth in the rumour:

"Other news I am advertised of, that a scald, trivial, lying pamphlet called *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* is given out to be of my doing. God never have care of my soul, but utterly renounce me, if the least word or syllable in it proceeded from my pen, or if I were any way privy to the writing or printing of it."

Sir Sidney Lee says: "On March 3, 1591-2, *Henry VI* was acted at the Rose Theatre by Lord Strange's men. It was no doubt the play subsequently known as Shakespeare's *First Part of Henry VI*, which presented the war in France and the factious quarrels of the nobility. . . ." On its production the piece, owing to its martial note, won a popular triumph, and the unusual number of fifteen performances followed within the year.¹

Thomas Nashe, in his *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Divell* (entered in the Stationers Register on August 8, 1592), added an enthusiastic reference to one of the chief characters in the play. "How it would have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on

¹ *Life of Shakespeare*, 1915, p. 114.

the Stage and have his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at severall¹ times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding."

In the foregoing pages I had no intention of writing a life of Shakespeare. The book was to have been a sketchy record of the surroundings and doings of the Shakespeares in Warwickshire, and I thought that one who lives between Snitterfield, where the Poet's father lived, and Wilmcote, where the Poet's mother was born, might venture to put down in black and white some of the facts that he had laboriously sought or fortuitously stumbled upon, in this interesting corner of England.

In attempting it I greatly regret the continual, but almost unavoidable repetition of the horrid pronoun "I."

In stating that the Poet may have found a home with a band of players in Lancashire and passed the most impressionable years of his life in great houses and with cultured people, instead of remaining in a butcher's yard till he married and left for London, I may not have provided the reading public with the sort of detailed narrative of Shakespeare's early life and work which we should all like to read, but it is one which puts less strain on their credulity than what has sometimes been offered them, and is at least less insulting to their intelligence.

¹ The word "severall" used there means "at different times," not "at several times" in our sense.

A P P E N D I X

I

• ERASMUS ROTERODAMUS FRANCISCO CARDINALIS EBORACENSIS
MEDICO S.

Liber xxii., Epist. 12.

Frequente & admirari & dolere soleo, qui fiat ut Britannia tot
jam annis assidua pestilentia vexetur, praesertim sudore letali, quod
malum pene' videtur habere peculiare. Legimus civitatem a diutina
pestilentia liberatam, consilio philosophi mutatis aedificiis. Aut
me fallit animus, aut simili ratione liberari possit Anglia. Primum
quam coeli partem spectent fenestrae ostiane nihil habent pensi:
deinde sic fere constructa sunt conclavia, ut nequaquam sint per-
stabilia, quod in primis admonet Galenus. Tum magnam parietis
partem habent vitreis tessellis pellucidam, qui sic admittunt lumen,
ut ventos excludant & tamen per rimulas admittant auram illam
colatam, aliquanto pestilentiorem, ibi diu quiescentem. Tum sola
fere strata sunt argilla, tum scirpis palustribus, qui subinde sic
renovantur, ut fundamentum maneat aliquantico annos viginti,
sub se fovens sputa, vomitus, mictum canum & hominum, pro-
jectam cervisiam & piscium reliquias, aliasque sordeos non nomi-
nandas. Hinc mutato coelo vapor quidam exhalatur, mea sententia
minime salubris humano corpori.

II

This drawing, which was made by a friend in 1875 in Lower
Brittany, may be the only representation of the primitive ox-
waggon, called in England a coupe, which now exists. Of course
the wheels were originally solid.

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